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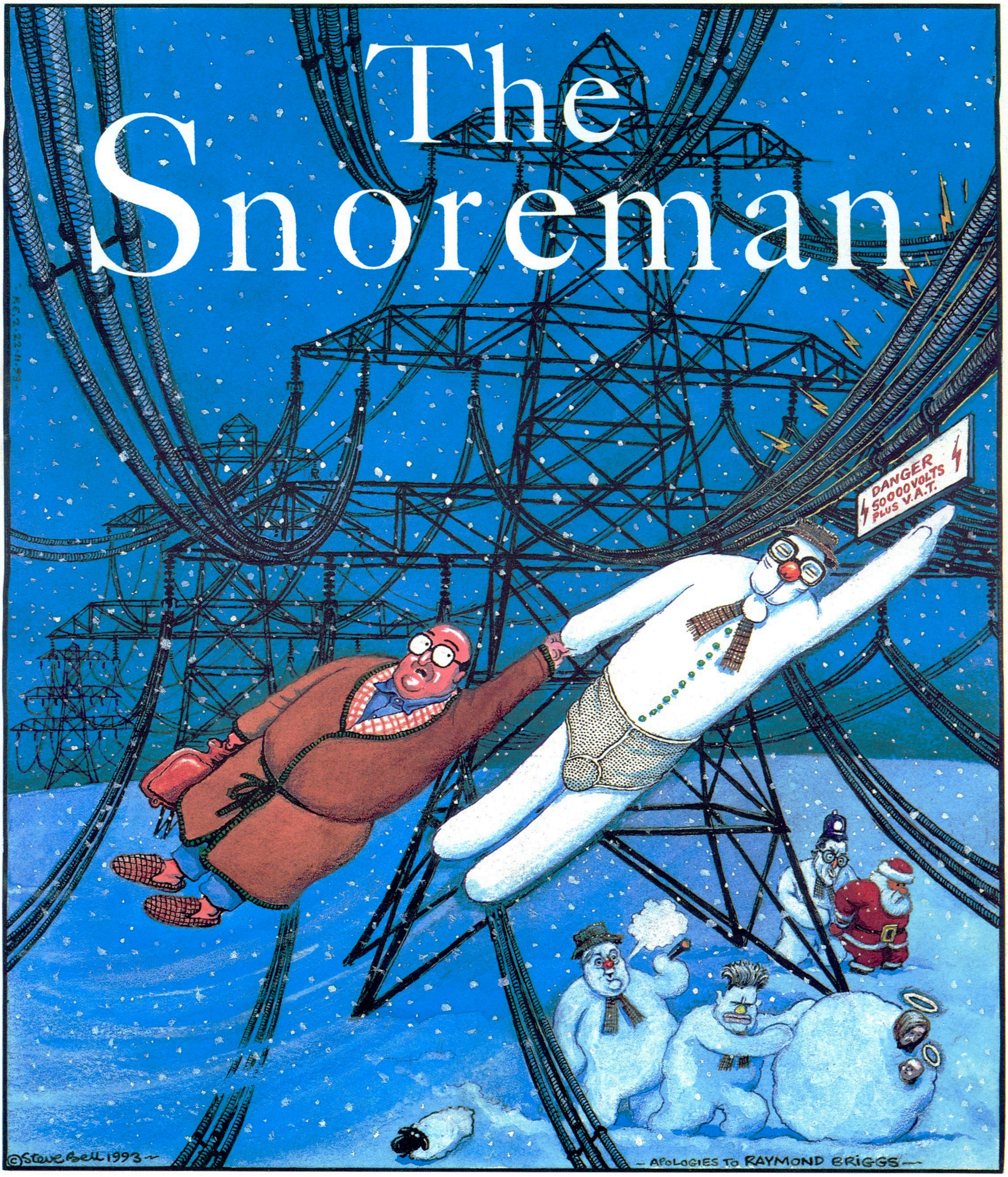
17 Dec. '93

PRIVATE EYE

90p

CHRISTMAS ISSUE



FOR MEN

HOMME

JOOP!

EAU DE TOILETTE

Gnome

A Message From Lord Gnome — Chairman Gnomeway Supermarkets

AS Christmas approaches I find myself more and more inclined to dispense with triviality and to concentrate on what is really vital in this life.

As I have meditated upon the day that we celebrate as Christmas, I have thought a great deal about that other day, Sunday, that we keep "special" on a more regular basis.

And I have to say that, strange as this may seem, I was sorely disappointed at the result of the recent Commons vote on the Sunday Trading Bill.

I feel that Sunday is a *very* special day and that it should be treated as special.

It is the one day that people do *not* work and therefore it is the one day that they can focus on a more important activity.

Shopping.

So, why are Gnomeways only able to open for a measly 6 hours? Why not 24 hours a day? Don't the Government know Christmas is coming? The decision is a disgrace.

Happy Cashmas! *(shurely 'Christmas'? E.S.)*

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COLOUR SECTION

NEWS that the "distinguished" city firm Goldman Sachs is to pay 26 London partners Christmas bonuses of at least $1 million each has not been greeted with festive good cheer by pensioners of companies once controlled by Robert Maxwell.

The pensioners are claiming £56 million, which they say was lost to them as a direct result of the behaviour of Cap'n Rob's favourite investment bank, Goldman Sachs. In June this year the biggest fine ever imposed by the Securities and Futures Association, £160,000, was slapped on Goldman Sachs in respect of various deals it carried out for fat crook.

Among the many deals masterminded by Goldman Sachs which worry the pensioners is the sale in 1991 of £25 million worth of shares held by the Maxwell Communications works pension scheme. The money for these shares was not paid to the pension fund, from which they were bought, but to Bishopsgate Investment Trust, a private company controlled by Maxwell. The agent for this payment was Goldman Sachs.

On a larger scale was the Goldman Sachs loan in the same year of more than £100 million to Maxwell and his companies. After the loan Goldman bid up Maxwell shares on the London stock market without disclosing its 7.5 per cent shareholding in MCC. This failure to disclose — for the astonishingly long period of four months — was the clearest possible breach of stock exchange rules, though it was described by Goldman Sachs as a "regrettable technical error" (of the type, presumably, which calls for million-dollar bonuses for partners).

Goldman Sachs's responsibility for the Maxwell swindle was examined closely by the Commons social services select committee which concluded as follows: "According to reports which we have seen, Goldman Sachs enthusiastically embraced Robert Maxwell as a source of substantial profit and fee income and was involved in advising on a variety of Maxwell transactions which ultimately resulted directly or indirectly in a substantial part of the loss the pensioners suffered."

The other stockbroking firm boasting this Christmas about enormous bonuses for its partners is Smith New Court, chairman Sir Michael Richardson, one of the closest friends and advisers of... Robert Maxwell. Smith New Court helped float Mirror Group Newspapers as a public company early in 1991, and so successfully secured it against corruption that within nine months Maxwell had managed to steal every penny of its £100 million profit.

IT NOW looks almost certain that Lady Thatcher will have to go back to the Scott inquiry to explain some of the 12,000 documents that have just been handed in by a Glasgow road haulier called Frank Machon. Who is Mr Machon — and what has he got?

Mr Machon has been very angry since 1988 when he was not paid for transporting an enormous cargo of artillery fuses and charges to ministry of defence depots.

Mr Machon was owed £68,825.48 by the arms company Allivane International Ltd, which went bust in 1989. He claims the MoD promised to pay him if the firm didn't, but then it reneged. Mr Machon has a court order for the money against Allivane and its successor, Aero Technologies.

Ever since, Mr Machon has been complaining that Allivane was a front company for the export of arms destined for Iran and Iraq during and after the war between the two countries from 1980 to 1988. He claims that arms manufactured in France, Portugal, Holland, Italy, and Spain (where the arms companies could not get export licences from their governments) were funnelled through Allivane in Britain to countries such as Yugoslavia, Thailand, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and from there, invariably, to Iran and Iraq.

What specially annoyed the irascible Mr Machon was that the British government export licences so generously granted went to Allivane International Group, a company which sounded like a subsidiary of Allivane but did not exist.

British ministers' first reaction to Machon was to say they had never heard of him. Defence procurement minister Jonathan Aitken, a former arms exporter to the Middle East and public relations man to the Saudi monarchy, told the House of Commons: "We were unable to trace any direct dealings with Mr Machon and his company." (*Hansard*, May 16 1992).

This claim quickly lost its lustre when Mr Machon produced documents from the MoD in June 1988 authorising him to store the Allivane fuses and charges at an MoD depot in Andover.

Aitken is likely to be further embarrassed by the 12,000 documents handed in by Machon to the Scott inquiry. So will Lady Thatcher. Her ladyship told Scott: "The public will be very glad to know that lethal equipment was not exported to Iraq" — a claim she repeated several times.

The public will be very glad to know the contents of a letter written to prime minister Thatcher in December 1988 by Frank Machon. He asked her about a dodgy end-user certificate for the sale of 15,000 155mm artillery shells sold to Saudi Arabia through Allivane. The export licences for the shells, he claimed, were for a cargo "three times the contract size". The explanation for the discrepancy, he claimed, was: "The commissions being paid to a certain major general in Saudi." Machon's letter concluded: "Either Britain or America is funnelling war equipment through Allivane which is certainly destined for Iraq."

No attempt was made by Thatcher or anyone else in high places to check these allegations, which were dismissed with the usual arrogance.

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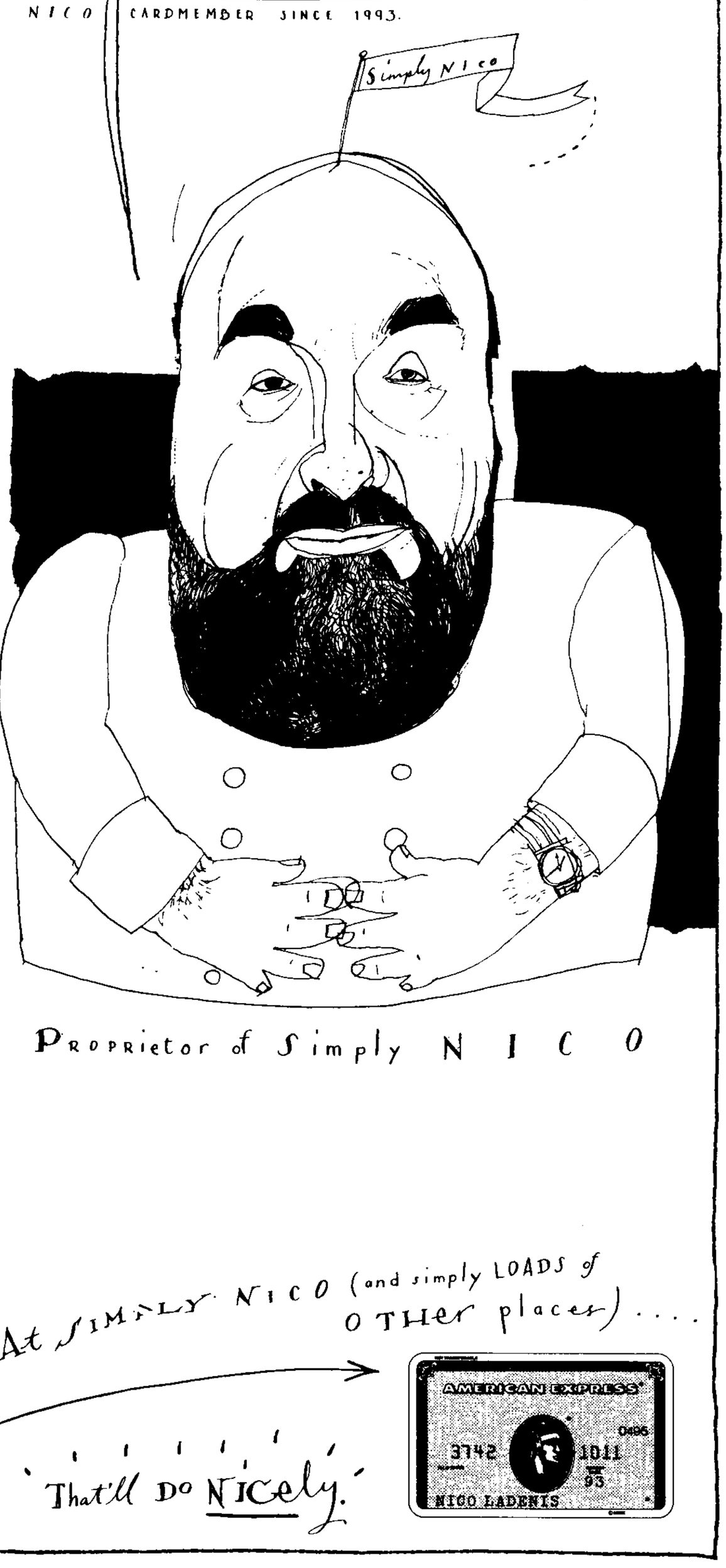
A SUN-DRIED tomato in

MY LIFE.

NICO CARDMEMBER SINCE 1993.



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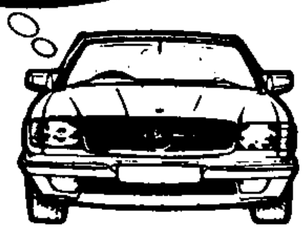

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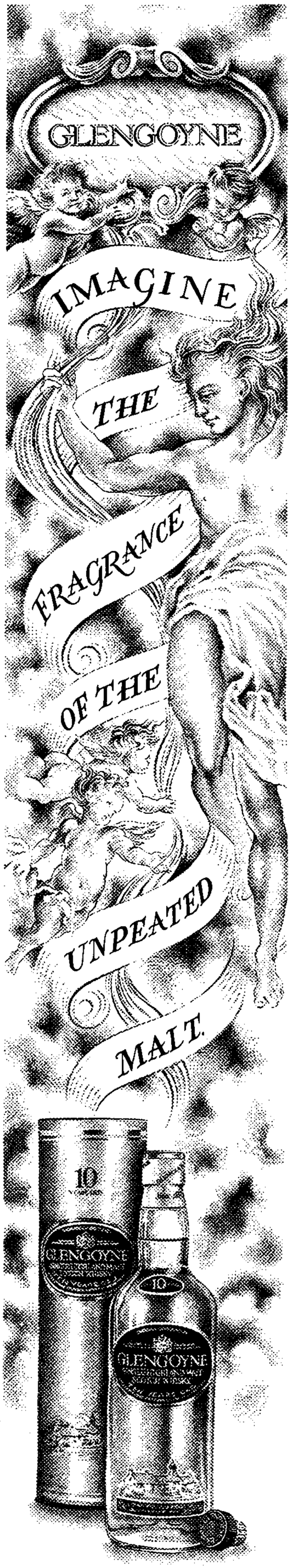


UNPEATED.
UNPARALLELED.

ONE OF the sillier arguments to surface after the Jamie Bulger murder case was a suggestion from the discredited education secretary John Patten that if more schools had compulsory uniform it would be easier to spot truants — and hence potential murderers — on the streets.

In fact there might be fewer truants to spot were it not for the government's education "policies".

It dreamed up the so-called "Baker Days", for example, when schools are closed to pupils on a random basis. Unlike normal holidays, individual schools pick the dates for such training, giving youngsters the perfect excuse to roam the streets.

In addition, chronic underfunding means that every winter thousands of pupils have to be sent home because ancient school boilers have broken down.

THERE IS no more confident minister than Neil Hamilton, MP for Tatton and former observer for the Young Conservatives at the 1972 conference of the Italian Fascist Party, MSI.

Mr Hamilton is forever bobbing up and down with witty cracks about Labour, so it was rather difficult to explain his silence during the debate on the Queen's speech on 24 November.

Robin Cook from the Labour front bench recalled Mr Hamilton's hilarious speech at the Tory party conference in which he brought to the rostrum a huge list of EC directives and, to howls of cheers from the faithful, dramatically tore them up. Hamilton referred in particular to the EC directive on the import of caramel. The Lord's prayer, he told the baying conference, need 59 words, the directive 26,911.

Said Robin Cook: "The only problem with the parable is that when we asked the EC commission for the directive on the import of caramel, it told us there was no such thing, although someone remembered Sir John Banham, when in Brussels two years ago, making an after-dinner speech in which he used that as a joke."

For some inexplicable reason the ebullient Mr Hamilton stayed in his seat.

THE GO-AHEAD is expected before Christmas for the biggest white elephant in British history: the Thorp nuclear dustbin plutonium plant at Sellafield.

Technically, the decision will be taken by the ministries of environment (Gummer) and agriculture (Shepherd). But the real driving force is the former department of energy, now absorbed in the department of trade and industry (DTI).

The connections between the nuclear lobby, led by British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL), and the DTI are prodigious. The chairman of BNFL, John Guinness, is a former permanent secretary at the department of energy. Minister of state at the DTI in charge of energy, Tim Eggar, is a former parliamentary consultant to Hill and Knowlton, which now advises BNFL.

Parliamentary under-secretary of state at the DTI, Baroness Denton, ennobled by John Major, came to the job direct from the boardroom of BNFL. The DTI spent many millions of public money on a report from Touche Ross on the viability of Thorp. As the *Eye* pointed out on 22 October, John Roques, a senior Touche Ross partner, is a director of BNFL.

The report is not publicly available. The Campaign for Freedom of Information has tried to get it, but was told it was secret. The campaign says that three organisations — BNFL, the health and safety executive (HSE) and the radioactive waste management advisory committee — are all breaking the law by refusing to make public information they have on the environmental effects of Thorp. This view is likely to be tested by Greenpeace who will issue writs to delay the project as soon as Gummer gives the go-ahead.

JOHN REDWOOD, the Welsh secretary, seems so keen to prove his Thatcherite credentials that he is even denying that his wet predecessor David Hunt, now running the department of unemployment, had a modicum of success during his stint in Wales.

Last month Redwood's Welsh office released a glossy survey showing that the Valleys' Initiative — a plan started in 1988 to revive the old coalfields — was a flop.

Strangely, at the same time the Welsh office received a report that it had commissioned from independent consultants which declared that the initiative was not quite as gloomy as all that. One might have thought this was just the sort of good news Redwood would be happy feeding to the media. But no. He said the document must stay under wraps; one copy in the Commons library would being sufficient.

Perish the thought that he is anxious to deny credit to a cabinet colleague whom the scourge of lone parents considers to be a first-class softie.

KENNETH CLARKE'S budget is set to increase traffic congestion in Britain's car-strewn towns and cities.

On the face of it, adding 3p a litre to petrol and diesel tax might appear to make motorists think twice before driving everywhere, which is in line with the government's alleged aim of levelling the balance between public and private transport.

But Clarke refused to grant bus operators the rebate for local services which normally accompanies rises in fuel tax. And operators say this will push up the net cost of bus fuel by about 30 percent — a cost which will soon be passed on to passengers in the form of fares increases of around 2 percent.

Outside London, fares have already risen about 30 percent above inflation since buses were deregulated in 1986; and their use has fallen by about 25 percent. Most private bus companies cannot afford to buy new buses (a third of them are now more than 12 years old), and Clarke's budget surprise will simply accelerate this decline, encouraging more people to travel by car.

British buses are generally perceived as transport for the unfortunate few who do not own cars — primarily pensioners. Publicly, the elderly may have gained some concessions on domestic-fuel value added tax, but quietly Clarke has made sure they will lose out just as much through increased fares.

LABOUR party "modernisers" who removed Peter Hain from the leadership of the Tribune group in Parliament are now exerting their influence over *Tribune* newspaper.

Of many strange happenings, the most significant has been the publication of a turgid leaflet by Gordon Brown explaining, without saying anything controversial, how to solve the nation's financial problem: close the tax loopholes.

Tribune agreed under pressure from Brown's office to publish it as a pamphlet with Brown providing the finance. In the past, *Tribune* pamphlets have been from the party's radical left. While Brown could have been published by the Labour party (or the Fabians or some other nugatory grouplet), he was determined to have the cachet of *Tribune*'s imprimatur.

'Backbiter'

"This Royal divorce is certainly dividing churchmen"

THE ROAD LOBBY (6)

MORE than 1,500 wildlife sites, including 161 sites of special scientific interest (SSIs) and 500 ancient woodlands, are threatened by Britain's enormous road-expansion plans.

Most of these projected roads will be built in due course — thanks to the power of the road lobby/British Roads Federation — as part of a £22 billion programme to increase road capacity by 5 per cent (to accommodate forecast traffic growth of 100 per cent). Traffic on rural roads could increase by up to four times by 2025.

Caravan owners obviously appreciate the countryside. For them to campaign for new roads which destroy the rural peace and beauty they seek to enjoy would be like turkeys voting for Christmas. Strange, then, that the BRF's membership list (as at 31 December 1992) includes none other than... the Caravan Club.

FACT: Members of the Caravan Club, like those of the AA and RAC, are not asked whether they want their subscriptions to be used to campaign for more roads.

WATER NEWS

HALF-YEARLY profits of £74.8 million have been announced by the people's friend, Yorkshire Water plc — an increase of 4.2 percent on the same six months last year.

The company should have no difficulty paying the £110,000 it has been fined for pollution incidents since privatisation in 1989, and will have enough left over to finance a further appeal after losing a bid to have one of the convictions quashed.

The high court upheld a ruling by magistrates in Batley and Dewsbury to convict Yorkshire Water for allowing a poisonous solvent to be released into the River Spen via its North Bierley sewage works.

JOHN KENT PRESENTS
JOHN MAJOR'S SENSATIONAL BIG TOP
CIRCUS & MENAGERIE
SANTA'S CLAWS!
WE'VE INTRODUCED THE BIGGEST TAX INCREASES IN HISTORY!
I THOUGHT WE WERE THE PARTY OF TAX CUTS!
WE HAVE TO INCREASE THEM BEFORE WE CUT THEM!

Street of Shame

CERTAIN Norfolk residents who live near the royal estate at Sandringham are vastly amused at the success of the hoax they recently pulled on the so-called newspaper of the year, the *Sunday Express*.

When two hacks from the paper went to Sandringham to find out how the royal family spend the festive season, local inhabitants telephoned one another to hatch their joke. The result was a story which not even a school newspaper would have believed, but which was somehow not questioned by Eve Pollard or any of her overpaid editorial executives at the Grey Lubyanka.

Among the "exclusive revelations" which the paper swallowed hook, line and sinker, despite their manifest absurdity, was the news that "the Windsors are well known at the Ffolkes Arms in nearby Hillington where they sit beside a blazing fire, playing charades and the board game Mid Life Crisis."

"That's a load of rubbish," the pub's landlady told the *Eye* last week. "The queen hasn't been in here as long as I've been here, and that's three and a half years." There were some equally preposterous claims about royal Christmas presents: "The Princess Royal has previously given socks, picked up from country fairs at £3 a pair, or 50p bars of soap..."

The article has made Eve Pollard's newspaper a laughing stock at Buckingham Palace, not only because of the transparently untrue information it included but also for its earth-shattering disclosure: "On Christmas Day, the royal family has a turkey and plum pudding meal."

ALTHOUGH Princess Di has withdrawn from the limelight, there is no sign that Fleet Street's royal-watchers are doing likewise. Their production of high-quality humbug has continued unabated since her recent announcement.

James Whitaker of the *Mirror* — "The Man Who Really Knows Fuck All About The Royals" — was sure why Diana needed more time to herself: "The biggest thorn in Diana's flesh is not the press but her estranged husband." Predicting that "a divorce will almost certainly happen", he reminded the world that "in 1985, I was writing that the Prince and Princess of Wales were seriously out of tune".

Strange, then, that as recently as March 1992 Whitaker dismissed the same suggestion when it was made by a rival royal-watcher, Lady Colin Campbell. "A new book claims that their marriage has been rocky for nearly six years," he wrote at the time. "Senior palace aides gave it no credibility. They have not ruled out the possibility of taking action."

And what of our old chum Nigel Pratt-Dumpster, another man who claims to have "royal friends"? Since Princess Di's announcement he has revealed to *Mail* readers that "there is no man hidden in her life". He poured scorn on a rival newspaper, the *People*: "Only five weeks ago, Diana and her circle were appalled at the lurid description in a Mirror Group Newspaper accompanying a photograph of her pecking the cheek of William van Straubenzee in greeting." Dumpster helpfully reproduced van Straubenzee's photo.

Alas, this picture was taken from an article in the *Mail* on 31 July headed "Jetting Off: Diana, the Prince and Mr Mystery." The *Mail* asked: "Just who was the casually dressed young man flying to Scotland for the weekend with Princess Diana and her party last night?"

Continuing his attack on the *People*, Dumpster noted that "the same rag wasted the front page... with an equally specious claim that Princess Anne is pregnant". What he neglected to mention was that six days after the *People* story, this appeared in another newspaper: "THE BUMP? A day at the races... and an air of expectancy. Profile of Anne, possibly shaping up for a happy event." And which paper was making so much of this "specious claim"? Step forward the *Daily Mail*.

HONG KONG governor Chris Patten has been greatly encouraged by support he has received from some sections of the British press.

There was, for example, a letter from Edward Mortimer, a *Financial Times* columnist, after that paper had run an unhelpful editorial on Hong Kong. "Dear Chris," it began. "Many thanks for your fax of the 11th... Is there any time when I could see you during your UK visit? Would you like to come to the *FT* and tell us the error of our ways? I wasn't involved in the leader in question, and had some difficulty myself in deciding what it was trying to say..."

Eager to assist, Mortimer proposes an idea ("which I might float in a column") that would enhance the governor's prestige. "Why not hold ordinary British-style elections for an ad hoc assembly, which would have no pretensions to survive beyond 1997 but would be required to advise you on how to settle the issues in dispute with China before then?

"If it said go ahead with your plan you would have clearly shown that that's what HK people want... If it said no, settle with China at any price, then you could say quite honourably that it is not for Britain to force democracy on people who don't want it... All the best. Hope to hear from you again soon. Love to Lavender, and Alice, from Edward."

Mortimer was not the only *FT* writer to wish Chris and Lavender well. The paper's political editor, Philip Stephens, sent a letter which ended: "From here it looks as if life for you is getting rougher. I am sure though that you will stick with it as long as you can carry the people with you. I hope they have the foresight to do so. Good luck. My love to Lavender."

Isn't it refreshing to find journos with such positive attitudes?

THE party season kicked off on a suitably sour note at the *Daily Mirror*.

A large group of hacks, including the sacked and those still on the payroll, gathered in the *Mirror* pub, the Stab in the Back, to mark the anniversary of chief executive David "Rommel" Montgomery's first round of mass sackings a year ago.

All was good cheer until the *Mirror*'s teatime editor, Brendan "Dyslexic Damien" Parsons (he of the macho hair-pulling ways) entered the front bar of the Stab. The room fell silent — and the assembled hacks spontaneously moved en masse into the back bar, leaving Damien nursing his half of bitter in splendid isolation.

LEONARDO'S restuarant in Chelsea was the venue for the 40th birthday celebrations of Sue Carroll, fag-toting deputy editor of the *News of the Screws* and former woman's editor of the *Sun*.

The speech was given by *Sun* editor Kelvin McKenzie, who started off saying that there were 40 Things You Didn't Know About Sue Carroll, but that Charlie Catchpole had censored all references to sex and alcohol, and that left only four things. (Catchpole is the *Screws* TV critic who also screws Carroll).

Let's not waste any time with her being a girl guide, McKenzie continued, as she first came to the attention of most of you when she broke the habit of a lifetime and went out with an unmarried man, former *Sun* hack Steve Samson. McKenzie recalled a visit to a country hotel for a "think-tank" session, during which Samson emerged early one morning, after a night with la Carroll, looking pale and wan. "If they gave air miles for shagging, I'd never get off the ground," Samson admitted.

When Kelvin was accused of having gone too far, he replied that he could have told *another* story about the weekend — that when Samson had been leaning out of his bedroom window and waving at his colleagues below, none of them had realised until later that he had been "shagging" la Carroll at the same time.

THE FUTURE looks bleak for Jocelyn "Miss" Targett, £90,000-a-year editor of the *Mail on Sunday*'s "Night and Day" supplement, and his band of equally overpaid contributors.

Just a few weeks after the launch of the much-hyped new section, even senior executives at Associated Newspapers are conceding that it has been a costly disaster. So much so that on Monday this week "Miss" Targett was summoned to a crisis meeting with *MoS* editor Jonathan Holborow and *You* magazine editor Dee Nolan to discuss the future of "Night and Day" — if any.

Still, even in times of crisis "Miss" Targett does not stint himself. Although the meeting could perfectly well have been held at the office, it took place amid the opulent splendour of Cliveden, Lord Astor's old mansion on the Thames which is now one of the most expensive country-house hotels in England.

***GRAUNIAD* editor Peter Preston was quick to mount his high horse when the *Mirror* published its peeping Tom pictures of Princess Di. The press's self-regulatory bodies must be respected, he said.**

This caused some surprise at one such body, the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC), whose rules Preston and his smarmy managing director, Jim Markwick, have been flouting for the past four years.

Like other papers, the *Grauniad* sells its advertising space on the basis of circulation figures audited by ABC. In recent years these figures have included the sales of its continental edition, printed daily in Frankfurt, which is largely bought by British holidaymakers.

For this to be acceptable under ABC rules, adverts from the British edition must also be included in the Euro-edition. But in fact the Flash Harrys of Farringdon Road have been pulling a fast one, by regularly dropping adverts from the Euro-*Guardian* without telling the firms that placed them.

Two months ago, when ABC found out about the scam, it told the *Grauniad* to clean up its act. In an attempt to do so, Markwick ordered more pages to be printed in Europe and changed the conditions of acceptance of ads. ABC was not satisfied, since adverts were still being knocked off arbitrarily, in effect selling advertisers short.

"If they wish to continue to claim sales of the continental edition they will have to maintain the all-advertising requirement," an ABC spokesman explained to the *Eye*.

Last week Markwick and Preston were given "one last chance"; failing that, they would have the Euro-sales disallowed, which would cause a drastic fall in the paper's official circulation total. Faced with this dire threat, the *Grauniad* capitulated.

HALLO!

HALLO! *WE ARE INVITED to the annual Vogue party at our favourite restaurant San Lorenzo (love and kisses to Mara!), where the assembled company are delighted by the arrival of an unexpected guest.*

Jack Nicholson, the gracious film legend, is brought by Michael White, our favourite impresario. A special table is erected near the door from which Jack can sit and view the other guests (who are, of course, all looking at him).

As a father, Jack is transfixed by the sight of a fashion PR girl who has recently given birth and is blessed with nature's bounteous supply of nourishment. After a while he turns to me and wittily observes: "That girl is so entranced by the way I'm staring at her that you could reach over and pull her panties down." What a Joker he is!

HALLO! **FLAMBOYANT former Liverpool councillor Derek Hatton finally has something to celebrate.**

The biggest Christmas "present" is from the Crown Prosecution Service, which is returning all the files it amassed on Derek's completely legitimate business dealings. The second gift is from Merseyside police, who hounded him cruelly during Operation Cheetah, the local government corruption probe. They have destroyed their files containing his photograph and fingerprints — and all in time for Christmas!

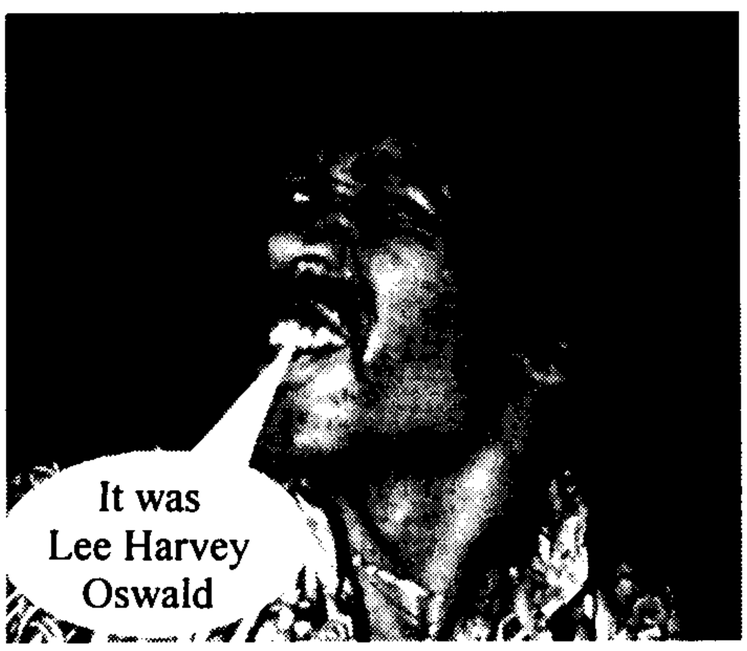
"Degsy" can now relaunch his PR business, modestly called Derek Hatton Promotions. But sadly not everyone will share his joy. Party poopers include Det Supt Bill Coady and officers of Cheetah, who as recently as last March gave the impression that further charges may follow against Mr Hatton, who lists Militant Tendency politics and male modelling among past interests.

Following his court acquittal, Merseyside taxpayers will want to toast the justice system. Over £20 million of their money was spent on the police's unfortunate misunderstandings with Degsy. But it was all worth it to prove he was totally innocent. Cheers!

HALLO! THE delightful entertainer Julian Clary received some hurtful criticism from the press last week after telling an amusing joke at the glittering ITV comedy awards.

Julian told the audience that he had just been "fisting" the former chancellor of the exchequer, Norman Lamont, on Hampstead Heath: a typically charming single-entendre about jolly homosexual practices.

The talented Julian was upset that this was taken amiss. Why, only the previous week he had confessed to Melvyn Bragg on *The South Bank Show* that he liked innuendo because it meant he could shock heterosexuals with the details of gay sex and "rub their noses in it". Sadly, Julian didn't say whether he rubbed Norman Lamont's nose in it after their imaginary fisting session!



HALLO! EVERYBODY'S favourite uncle, John Mortimer, tells us that this festive season is tinged with sadness for him.

His former wife, Penelope Mortimer, wrote most cruelly about their marriage in a memoir published a few weeks ago. Now, much to dear old Rumpole's surprise, he has received a message from her demanding that he increase her maintenance payments.

Still, Mortimer is cheering himself up by looking forward to the treats in store on Christmas Day — "roast turkey for me, with all the trimmings!" he chortles.

HALLO! **FIGHTING back the tears, handsome entrepreneur Alan Sugar protests at the latest television probe into the finances of his football club, Tottenham Hotspur.**

"I am a straight dealer," he says. "People know where they stand with me. I give a straight answer."

This is not his only cause of sadness at the moment. Earlier this year, Alan tried to persuade Amstrad shareholders to sell out to him at a cut price on the ground that the company had few new products planned and faced a grim future. The shareholders rejected his generous attempt to rescue them, since when Amstrad has moved into the new and potentially lucrative mobile phone market and seen its share price soar well above the price that he offered.

If only they had accepted his offer, he tells us, he would now be a rich man!

HALLO!

O·B·N

Whenever she [the Princess of Wales] appears, there is a joyous lifting of hearts. Smiles break out, a light comes into the eyes of old and young, there is a murmur of pure pleasure, the clouds roll back, the sunbeams dance, and everyone begins to count their blessings again.

PAUL JOHNSON
Daily Mail

Submitted by P. Mann.

£10 paid for all entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

HALLO!

HALLO! **CONGRATULATIONS to Andrew Neill, the *Sunday Times* editor and champion of press freedom, who has found a new love in Loanna Morrison, 34-year-old gossip columnist with *The Voice* newspaper.**

Loanna's other hobbies includefootballer and *Gladiators* presenter John Fashanu.

Andrew has always pursued an enlightened policy on race matters at the *Sunday Times* and generously sends Loanna back home to Brentwood in company-account minicabs. It was touching to see him publish a piece by her in his exciting style section recently, about her desire to return to Jamaica to live. Hopefully, their love will be strong enough to span the ocean.

HALLO! WINSTON CHURCHILL MP, that formidable inheritor of his family's talents, boldly spoke up in favour of the Keep Sunday Special campaign the other day. "I shall be casting my vote in support of the family," he told us in a press release.

It gives new hope for humanity that the press have refrained from mentioning Winston's amorous escapades over the years. Why should a few pastindiscretions prevent him from riding to the rescue of family life? And Sunday lunch as well?

HALLO! NO ONE speaks more eloquently about the fall in moral standards in the Conservative party than the impressively built MP for Welwyn, David Evans.

Mr Evans, a sports buff known for his keen sense of fun, has to take himself more seriously now that he has been elected to the prestigious 1922 committee. Speaking recently about the many affairs of his colleague, transport minister Stephen Norris, Mr Evans said:

"To me the Tories are the party that is clean-cut. We were the party that sets standards. We were honourable. We stand for the family. Tories should guard against the decline in morality. We believe in clean living and family values." And three cheers to that!

Nevertheless, cricketers in the north London area have been asking of this is the same David Evans who, as captain of Edmonton cricket club, once delivered the keynote speech at the conference's annual dinner in the cricket pavilion at Hounslow.

Revellers recall a sealed brown envelope on every plate, which they were instructed not to open until after the captain's speech. As soon as he finished, Captain Evans told the guests to open the envelopes, in each of which was a condom. "Have a fuck on me!" bellowed the rumbustious captain — obviously *not* the David Evans who now talks so movingly about honour and morality.

HALLO! **PUTTING the unpleasantness of the Gulf War behind it, Saudi Arabia has resumed its role as a beacon of religious tolerance and progressive ideas. But some customs remain intriguing for its British and foreign guest workers.**

Children and their parents at Yanbu International School in Dharan, for example, were a little taken aback during their recent "winter" concert when four *maatawah* and two uniformed policeman suddenly burst into the auditorium.

The *maatawah*, or religious police, chased some children backstage before demanding that the "winter" concert be stopped and the school director accompany them to the police station.

As is common at this time of year, some three and four year olds became over-excited and had to be led screaming and shaking from the building.

To those expats in Saudi who will be treating 25 December as a normal day — they have no choice — and to their generous, understanding employers — we wish everyone in Saudi Arabia very happy *Christmas*.

The Marquesa

TUC NEWS

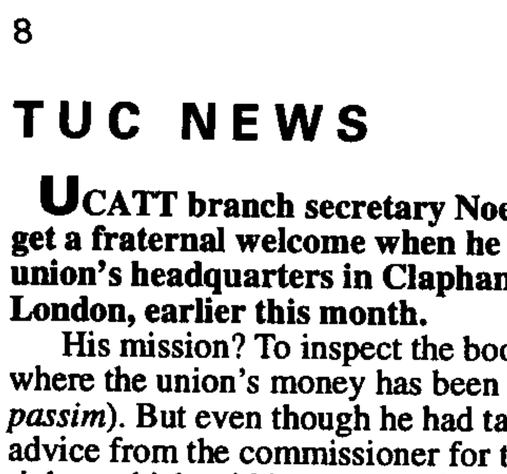
UCATT branch secretary Noel Kelly did not get a fraternal welcome when he visited his union's headquarters in Clapham, south London, earlier this month.

His mission? To inspect the books and find out where the union's money has been going (see *Eyes passim*). But even though he had taken legal advice from the commissioner for trade union rights, which said he was entitled to obtain financial information, he was politely shown the door by assistant general secretary Jim Hardman, who described himself "as a mere messenger".

Kelly particularly wanted to find out why his executive had paid £8,000 last March to a security firm which specialises in the telephone bugging field. Staff were told that the spooks were sweeping the building with anti-bugging devices. Employees, however, are scared to use any of the phones because they fear bugs have been *installed* rather than taken out.

General secretary George Brumwell is keen to catch those who have leaked sensitive information to organs such as the *Eye* and has already employed a private detective (Kenneth Day of Beckenham, Kent) to spy on a former trade journalist Tony Yorke and dissident UCATT officials including Kelly, who has had dustbins searched.

Kelly also wants to know how the bankrupt union funded a £109,000 flat for Brumwell in Selhurst Close, Kingsmere Place, Wimbledon.



with 'New Muckspreader'

DESPITE well-founded estimates that more than 25,000 farmers have been affected by organo-phosphorus sheep dips, agriculture minister Gillian Shephard has refused to ban their use.

She claims that only just over 500 cases of OP poisoning have been officially recorded, and argues that these "must be seen in the context of over a million occasions when flocks involving hundreds of millions of sheep were dipped".

Of course the good Shephard completely ignored the prospect of a ban exposing the government to hundreds of millions of pounds in compensation claims because her ministry's veterinary medicine directorate approved OPs, and the state veterinary service made their use compulsory.

Nevertheless, for the ministry which has presided over a reign of terror in the poultry industry after public concern over salmonella food poisoning, there is just a tiny hint of a double standard. Action which included the banning of virtually any use of raw eggs was triggered by a food poisoning "attack rate" of one person per 1.5 million meals served — yet the 500 cases of OP poisoning represent an "attack rate" of one person ill per 2,000 sheep-dipping occasions... and no ban is thought necessary.

Another curious discrepancy is that while food poisoning levels are often multiplied by ten to estimate the true incidence of an illness which is often under-reported, no allowance has been made for OP poisoning, which is probably under-reported by a factor of 50.

At least worried farmers can take comfort in Mrs Shephard's imaginative plan to require sheep dippers to hold a "certificate of competence". They can be assured that this will have a significant effect in reducing the amount of illness reported — by the simple expedient of withdrawing the certificates of any farmers silly enough to report illness. Since this will leave them without a legal means of working, few will take the risk of making an official report.

At the stroke of a pen, therefore, Mrs Shephard has engineered a means of reducing the official toll of OP poisoning without in any way reducing the risks to the unfortunates who have to use these deadly chemicals. How lucky we are to have such a clever minister.

SIR Jerry Wiggin, chairman of the Commons agriculture select committee, has been trawling the poultry industry to find examples of law being more rigorously applied in the UK than in Europe. But the only example poultrymen would offer was the difference in vaccine licensing programmes.

Even though vaccines may be approved in one European country and used throughout the mainland, their licenses are not accepted here until our own veterinary medicines directorate has extracted £12,000 in fees — higher than any other member state charges — and taken many months to complete the paperwork.

However, harassed poultry-men who have lost millions of birds to disease because of the bureaucratic delays, will be pleased to learn that this problem is to be sorted out when a new Euro-quango — the "European medicines evaluation agency" — is launched, possibly some time next year. The only snag is that instead of paying £12,000 for a licence, vaccine producers will have to pay £150,000. Plus ça change...

UK BARLEY barons are looking forward to another increase in their already over-generous subsidies as common agricultural policy (CAP) spending is set to rise £130 million to £2,460 million in 1994/5 and by £230 million to £2,920 million the following year.

Meanwhile cash-strapped MAFF is having to cut its budget by £40 million in 1994/5 to fund this Euro-extravagance, which costs every man, woman and child in this country £500 each, every year.

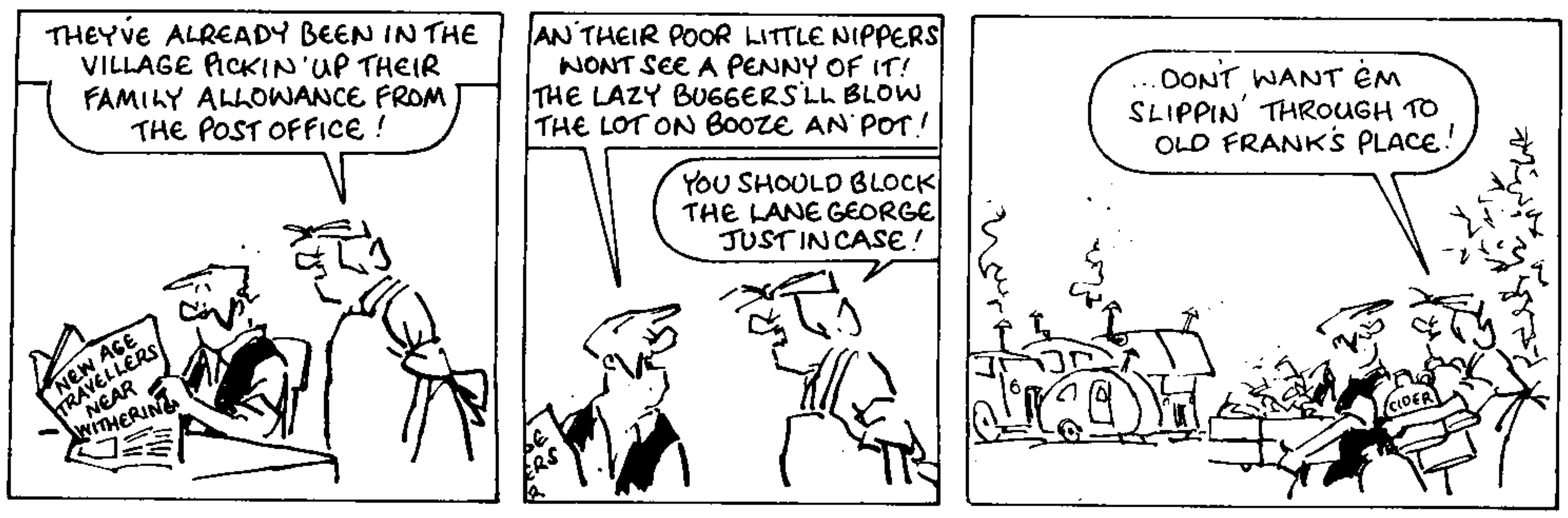
Top of the list for MAFF's cuts are the hill farmers, already the poorest land workers in the UK with average incomes of less than £10,000. They will lose £25 million, reducing their overall grant to £105 million, less than 4 percent of the current CAP budget.

Just to prove how "green" the government really is, MAFF also proposes to slash £12 million off the anticipated £43 million in grants for environmentally sensitive areas, peanuts compared with total spending committed by the EC.

So while moves to improve our agricultural environment are progressively abandoned, hill farmers starve and their farms revert to scrub, the barley barons are set to increase spending on new tractors by more than 30 percent. What would we do without the EC?

Old Macdonald

ALBERT


THEY'VE ALREADY BEEN IN THE VILLAGE PICKIN' UP THEIR FAMILY ALLOWANCE FROM THE POST OFFICE!
NEW AGE TRAVELLERS NEAR WITHERING
AN' THEIR POOR LITTLE NIPPERS WONT SEE A PENNY OF IT! THE LAZY BUGGERS'LL BLOW THE LOT ON BOOZE AN' POT!
YOU SHOULD BLOCK THE LANE GEORGE JUST IN CASE!
...DONT WANT 'EM SLIPPIN' THROUGH TO OLD FRANK'S PLACE!
CIDER

"Before I go, here are some leaflets on breathing techniques, pain relief, different birth positions and breast-feeding"

SALLY DEEDES

PHILIP PEDLEY, a retired solicitor, has been fighting the General Accident insurance company for the last two years over the loss of a ring valued at £2,867.

Mrs Pedley was taking the ring to the jeweller's for repair, and while on her way left it briefly in her bag — which was locked in her car which itself was left in a private driveway. During her absence (15 minutes or so) the car was ransacked and the bag stolen.

General Accident refused to pay up on the ground that Mrs Pedley had broken a condition that appears in most domestic policies: that the policy holder must take "all reasonable steps to prevent injury, loss or damage" to the insured property.

Mr Pedley knew from experience that the courts took a different view of this. In the court of appeal in 1967, Lord Justice Diplock established the principle that to breach the "condition" the conduct of the insured "must at least be reckless — ie made with the actual recognition by the insured himself that a danger exists not caring whether or not it is averted".

In other words recklessness is the test of liability, not carelessness; and it is for the insurer to prove it, not for the insured to disprove it. As Mr Pedley says, since insurance companies are under no legal obligation to point this out, they may be getting away with millions.

Given the many thousands of pounds he had paid over the years to General Accident in premiums, Mr Pedley applied to the insurance ombudsman for a ruling. The ombudsman appeared to think that the car had been parked on a busy road with the bag clearly visible, and found for the insurer.

Mr Pedley then took the matter to the small claims court and sued for £1,000. General Accident, employing big gun solicitors, first of all said the ring should have been kept in a safe and then that the Pedleys had failed to keep the ring in good repair — even though it was on its way to the jeweller's to be mended.

Next they applied to have the case hard in the county court so the threat of costs could be held against the Pedleys. This was turned down, but before the case came to the lower court General Accident declined to renew the premium.

The small claims court found that Mrs Pedley had *not* been guilty of recklessness and awarded her £1,000 plus costs of £43. Mr Pedley suggested to General Accident that since liability had been established perhaps it could honour its contract and pay the balance of £1,867. General Accident was having none of it: the Pedleys opted against a county court hearing, thus limiting the claim, and they must abide by the decision.

The aftermath of this two-year battle was that the Pedleys found themselves without house insurance. They applied to Norwich Union for whom Mr Pedley was an agent and with whom he had two pension and four motor policies. The Norwich refused cover. "Insurance companies do not have an obligation to offer cover to all who submit proposals for risk," wrote a Mr Loader, an assistant general manager.

Mr Pedley was angry that after so many years of loyalty he should be so treated. "Was this punishment for having the temerity to take an insurance company to court?" He is now insured by First Direct.

NOOKS and CORNERS

"BUGGER BOGNOR!" is one of the most hauntingly succinct lines of poetry ever uttered in the English language. Originally it expressed the opinion of the dying king, George V, about a repeat convalescence in that south coast resort. Recently, however, it has been given a more subtle nuance by the behaviour of the former Countess Spencer, who is one of Bognor's most glittering sometime residents along with the king and, um, Mick Jagger.

A kind reader has sent me the sales particulars issued by Pearsons, estate agents of Mayfair, "On instructions from the Comtesse Raine de Chambrun... A rare opportunity to acquire a family house in the Aldwick Bay Private Marine Estate..." This is "Tradewinds" in Arun Way, but also for sale is the next door house, "Hacienda", as well as two plots of land, carved out of the garden, each with outline planning consent for the construction of a new house.

Alas, the particulars are reticent about the tasteful display of opulent luxury created by Raine within her Sussex seat; the description of "Master Bedroom Suite" with its "patterned silk wallpaper" leaves one to imagine that profusion of mirror, marble, ruched curtains and goldleaf worthy of a minor Arab potentate.

Pearsons warns that "any information contained herein... is given in good faith but should not be relied upon as being a statement or representation of fact." No, indeed. The first bit of economy is, of course, the title of the vendor, who having been hooked by the desperately impecunious younger brother of a French count is not entitled to call

herself "countess" at all.

But we can sympathise: having been, successively, Miss McCorquodale, Mrs Gerald Legge, Viscountess Lewisham, the Countess of Dartmouth and then Countess Spencer, mere Mrs de Chambrun is a bit of a come-down.

Let us recap. As the chairman of the former Greater London council's Covent Garden development committee and then the chairman of the United Kingdom Executive of European Architectural Heritage Year in 1975, Raine acquired a certain reputation for caring about historic buildings. This was promptly dissipated after she married, in 1976, the 8th Earl Spencer and so became the chatelaine of Althorp, once a magnificent Georgian country house in Northamptonshire.

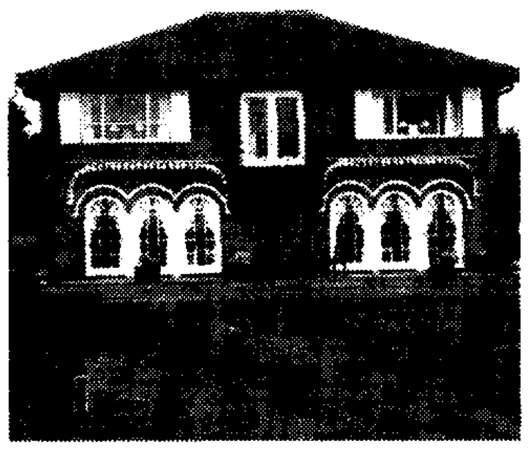
What followed was one of the most blatant and horrific examples of cultural asset stripping even by the standards of the Thatcher reign. As that silly old booby, Johnny Spencer, was devoted to Raine and as he resented his own father for (with reason) caring more about Althorp than about him, he allowed Raine to go ahead with a succession of sales of works of art and archives which were the pride of one of the great landed dynasties of English history.

The sack of Althorp was described in detail in an article in *Harpers & Queen* in 1988. What went were pictures that had been in the house for centuries, including almost all the Van Dycks as well as sets of Georgian furniture, porcelain, gold and silver. At the same time, rooms were elaborately re-upholstered, re-decorated and over-gilded so as to transform Althorp into a vulgar country house hotel.

What particularly stank about all this was Raine's claim that she was "doing up" Althorp because it was an uncomfortable ruin when she took over. This is, quite simply, a lie. Old Jack Spencer, the 7th earl, had carried out a thorough and exemplary restoration of the building in the 1950s and 60s, with 50 percent grants of public money. He had also, before the war, rescued furniture and chimneypieces from Spencer House — one of the very few "private palaces of London" not to be sold for redevelopment by their aristocratic owners.

Two significant reflections of

'Hacienda'



Raine's attitude to culture and the nation's heritage. First, she demanded that the Courtauld Institute of Art return the negatives of photographs of all the paintings at Althorp and prohibited reproduction of them. Second, when Jacob Rothschild began his magnificent restoration of Spencer House, Raine refused to let his team see the original chimneypieces rescued by the 7th earl and then charged for the privilege of copying them. Just how many millions of pounds was made out of the Althorp sales is not clear, nor is what happened to the money. All we do know is that in 1982 Raine acquired a 1960s hacienda-style house at Bognor and spent half a million on doing up this hideous and ridiculous building.

In all the articles on the Wicked Step-Mother, it was assumed that, when eventually widowed, Raine would retreat to "Tradewinds" to enjoy her twilight years. But we misjudged her. This ghastly woman evidently had no intention of living in her nest-egg for, instead, to the fury of local people, she has split up the estate and secured planning permission for a lucrative development. After all, what is "Tradewinds" but another asset to strip. As my correspondent remarks, it was "well worth a dreary Van Dyck or two, don't you think?"

MR ANTHONY ROSSI, the architect — whom I wrongly accused in Eye 834 of sitting on English Heritage committees — tells me that the parish of St Joseph's, Sheringham, has responded to pressure and replaced the missing scrolls. My spies confirm this and I am pleased to report the fact. It still seems a pity, of course, that the reredos was ever tampered with in the first place.

'Piloti'

Sweet
Apples chopped
Like pieces of time
Disjointed slices of simplicity
A tradition of tastes
Structured thoughts of London today
Relax inside Emporio's Express and melt away
Like the cool burn of ice-cream on a hot apple delight

Menu, Emporio Armani

I would like to invite you to immerse yourself in the world of the herpes simplex virus.

Press release

I'm not interested in a person debating the merits of my book. Not at all. If I've worked for three years on a book, and a person has read it in a weekend, they can't possibly know what I know about the book.

It's totally immaterial that he paid £15.99. In fact it's not enough, you would have to pay a lot more than that to have the privilege of discussing its merits. I'm amazed that people think I might be interested in hearing what they liked and what they didn't like... I'm definitely not interested in their opinions: my books aren't open for debate, it is that person's intelligence which is in question.

PAUL THEROUX
Independent

Pseuds Corner

There is a horrible vapid uniformity about cartoon animation. Everything is reduced to a vulgar and sentimental lowest common denominator — or as Baloo the Bear is forced to sing in this terrible travesty: "The bare (geddit?) necessities, the simple mother's recipes..." (Incidentally, isn't this a sexist lyric?)

Baloo, true to dreary cartoon convention, walks on his hind legs in that kitschy anthropomorphic haze through which Hollywood sees life in the wild; he has the standard, lumbering niceyniceness that bears are usually given in cartoons. Actually he, and many other cartoon characters, resemble nothing more than Nazi racial caricatures.

MINETTE MARIN
Daily Telegraph

I see *My Idea of Fun* as a surreal take on a traditional narrative, a destructive re-capitulation of 19th-century bildungsroman, with all the ghastly inevitability of classical tragedy.

WILL SELF
Waterstone's Christmas catalogue

PGCE English Major Assignment

a; in 1000 words construct a justified model of English in the secondary school; you should refer to the National Curriculum and its provenance, and whatever writers you judge as relevant; e.g. Leavis, Holbrook, Eagleton, Britton, et al.

b; in 500 words give a trenchant account of observed reality in the teaching of English in your Autumn term school...

The marking criteria are not mechanical but discourse related; each section of this assignment should be distinctive in germs of the rubric above.

Worcester College of Education

CONTRIBUTORS: D. Wareham, I. Kurtz, T. Waite, Lord Gnome, C. McDermott, R. Pitt.

£10 paid for entries

TV

Crime Story

(ITV)

THE broadcasting standards council (BSC) — the pronouncements of which have in the past suffered from the pinch-of-salt factor affecting any project involving Lord Rees-Mogg — last week released some genuinely interesting research.

Under its new chair, Lady Howe, the BSC published a survey revealing that a sample audience shown a dramatic "reconstruction" of a crime of violence became uneasy in a way that was not merely to do with simple distaste at the depiction of violence. The specific sentiment generally expressed was a desire to know in advance whether the victim had survived the dramatised attack.

The survey was commendable for asking a more sophisticated question than has usually been the case in this debate. The kneejerk moral watchdogs argue that viewers are incapable of distinguishing between fictional violence and factual violence. Reflex liberals counter with the view that audiences have a highly developed sense of the difference between violence in drama and in news. Here, though, was a much more subtle distinction.

Watching a hybrid "true life crime" reconstruction, viewers became disturbed at being asked to feel suspense and speculation normally associated with fiction over the fate of a character who represented a real human being. They wished to know — as they would with violent scenes in a news bulletin — the context and outcome of the incident.

The survey is timely because almost every made-for-TV film in the US these days is prefaced by a continuity announcement about its roots in real events and ends with a red-ink roller caption along the lines of: "Joe Schmo was sentenced to life imprisonment. Joanna Schmo is living somewhere in America under the federal witness protection scheme."

The worst British wannabe yet is ITV's **Crime Story**, over the opening credits of which a judge-like voice announces: "This drama is based on the known facts and new information of a real criminal case..."

Last week's story was the attempted assassination by a Yugoslav hitman of a Croatian activist in Kirkcaldy in 1989. The one-hour dramatisation employed two sources of suspense: a) exactly when would the pleasant bearded Croatian be shot by the surly Serb sitting in the hire care outside his house? and b) once shot, would he survive the tricky thoracic surgery? Both plot-lines were relentlessly milked for cliffhangers.

This is the central objection to this genre. The American networks — and the producers of *Crime Story* — tout the factual background of their dramas as if it were no more than one of those market-positioning boasts of authenticity: like real ale or fresh-caught fish. But there is something unpleasant about being asked to experience suspense, which is essentially an escapist artistic form, over whether real-life widows, orphans and corpses were created.

Such are the moral faults of pieces of fiction like *Crime Story*. But the artistic objections are equally strong. To claim a real-life basis for a drama seems frequently to be a waiver of responsibility for the shoddiness of the product as fiction. Noting implausibilities and ridiculous coincidences, the critic is wary of raising them for it is possible — indeed, is strongly suggested in the packaging — that unbelievable twist was a real unbelievable twist.

For example, in last week's Yugoslav hitman story, the assassin was chased to Edinburgh airport by police, where he persuaded British Airways to call a plane back to the gate after the passenger walkway was disengaged, hence narrowly avoiding arrest. Of course, this event was only momentarily tense, because you realised that the hitman would be a sitting target at Heathrow. However, at Heathrow, cops stopped every passenger off the flight without apprehending the baddie. How had he managed that? Well, it turned out that, although he had come down on the 10am shuttle, it was the *backup* flight he caught. Dashing to *that* plane, special branch got their man.

If a scriptwriter had come up with that stuff about the back-up system on the BA shuttle in a fictional crime story, we might have applauded his ingenuity. But, in a drama supposedly telling a true story, we wonder about the apparent inability of Kirkcaldy police to get the right shuttle met in London. But — then again — did the cops really bog it up or did the *Crime Story* dramatist beef it up, with this clever aviation plot-twist?

Every few lines of the script, such questions arise. Did the Croatian exile's neighbour in real life have a habit of saying aloud what he was writing down — or is that an invention to assist exposition? There is no way of knowing because *Crime Story* occupies the grey area between entertainment and journalism. The grey people of the BSC are to be praised for shining some light on that grey area.

'Square Eyes'

"It's the Queen's Christmas message"

MEDIA NEWS

THE "bold defence" of the "independence" of London Weekend Television being put up by Sir Christopher "Pigling" Bland and his fellow directors is being reluctantly supported by the hacks. They take the view it is marginally better to be bossed around and sacked by Pigling than by Gerry Robinson, the catering king who runs Granada.

The problem for Bland, Greg Dyke and the other LWT chiefs is that their minions are still furious by the shameless share options of last summer which enriched 53 lucky LWT bosses by (on the latest reckoning) about £70 million.

The general hacks' view is that Bland and Co are against the Granada bid because the price is too low; and that if they hang around until the law is relaxed still further to allow foreign companies and newspaper groups to take over TV companies, they could quadruple their fortunes instead of just doubling them.

Nor are the hacks too impressed by Bland's call to "preserve the station's independence" when the means of doing so is to buy up (and destroy the independence) of another station, Yorkshire TV, not to mention Tyne Tees.

The trough-wallowing of last summer still rankles greatly. Greg Dyke's desperate attempts to persuade his fellow chieftains to release some of their ill-gotten gains to the staff who made them possible have proved only partly successful. The Famous 53 have stumped up £1 million (rather less than 1.5 per cent of their total hoard), which works out at about £2,000 per staff member.

Robin Paxton, meanwhile, controller of features and current affairs, apparently feels the guilt more than most. He has written out cheques for £20,000 each to his trusted lieutenants Geoff Pope and Trevor Phillips. The same generosity has not been reported from the arts department (prop: Melvyn "The Red" Bragg, who is believed to have pocketed not a million pounds less than £3 million on the share scheme).

READERS of the *Observer* were recently treated to an essay on the evils of government censorship of television news, written by Tony "Head Prefect" Hall, the vapid David Mellor lookalike who "directs" the BBC's chaotic news and current affairs output.

Hall is hardly the best person to deliver such a pious denunciation, since he is running a campaign of censorship and intimidation of dissenters in his own unhappy little empire.

He has been particularly busy following the recent outpouring of frustration and anger from demoralised hacks, who have been writing anonymous messages on the newsroom computer protesting at the tedium of the *Nine O'Clock News*.

"You're a bloody disgrace," they fumed. "Go back to school and learn some basics... You've spent too long in Birtland and it's turned your heads... Buck up your ideas or make way for people who know how to run a news bulletin... You're not worth a piss in a pot..."

When a transcript of the computer comments appeared in the *Independent on Sunday*, Hall's thought police were swift to act. Management

CORPORATION STREET W.12
An everyday story of Broadcasting Folk
" HE'S THAT SLIGHT, BEARDED MAN...
WHO LONG AGO WAS PUT ON EARTH ...
ALL SOULS CHURCH
BBC YULETIDE SERVICE
WHO WE NOW TURN TO AS OUR SAVIOUR ...
ROVER'S REPEAT
BLAIR
TO PUSH UP THE XMAS RATINGS!"
"Trebles & Crinkley Bottom of the barrel all round!"
NOEL EDMONDS' CHRISTMAS HOUSE PARTY
LICENCE FEE
Ken Pyne

apparatchik Christopher Graham warned the hacks to remember that the computer "left footprints" — a dark reference to a previous witch-hunt in which technicians toiled for hours to identify a senior news reporter as the computer critic of the despised Tony Hall.

On that occasion the hack was dragged through the BBC's quasi-judicial disciplinary system, relieved of a tenth of his salary and threatened with the sack. When his offending message appeared in the *Eye*, the computer men went to work again, and every member of staff who had printed out a copy for themselves was formally interviewed and invited to confess to being the mole.

Hall's lofty claims to disapproval of censorship make an interesting contrast with the persecution of anyone in his department who says or writes something he doesn't like.

"Oh no! It's Martyn Lewis!"

THE loathsome Robert Kilroy-Silk has had his comeuppance for bullying a schoolgirl — on a *Kilroy* debate about bullying.

Emma Johnston attended the debate to give details, or so she thought, of what it was like to be a victim of bullying. But after hearing a harrowing account from a man whose daughter had committed suicide because of bullying, Kilroy turned on the hapless Emma and demanded: "Do you realise what you're doing?"

When she tried to respond he cut her off, and a complaint by Emma's father to the broadcasting complaints commission has been upheld. The commission found that Kilroy had hectored the girl, wrongly singled her out as a bully, unfairly linked her to events in which she had no part and had denied her the opportunity to explain her position.

Still, it makes good telly, doesn't it?

GORMLESS *Sun* columnist Piers Morgan is determined his nascent career in broadcasting will survive the purges at Radio One.

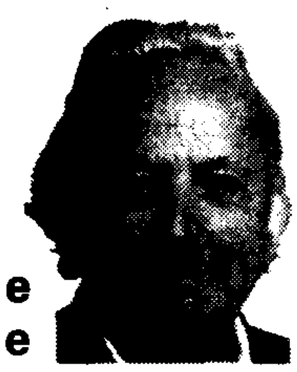
New controller Matthew Bannister's desire to create an audio version of the Groucho club will see Emma Freud replace Jakki Brambles as the station's lunchtime presenter next month.

Alas Morgan's weekly contribution to Bramble's programme is too uncouth for her successor's tastes. Piers is therefore quietly negotiating to defect to Richard Branson's Virgin 1215 where — subject to suitable financial arrangements — he hopes to feature on the (so far) entertaining Russ and Jono's breakfast show.

Prior to Morgan's arrival at R1 his *Sun* column carried numerous examples of brown-nosing towards the station and its management. True to form, Morgan has now started to run a series of attacks on BBC DJs, such as Danny Baker and Adrian Juste, while praising Richard Branson. No doubt he'll be in a generous mood when it comes to approving Morgan's pay cheques.

AN INDICATION of how far Birtism has penetrated BBC news and current affairs can be seen in the invitation list to the *Panorama* Christmas party.

Only those who have worked for the programme since 1987 — that is, in the years 1-6 AB (After Birt) — have been asked to attend.



HACKWATCH
Peregrine Worsthorne

PEREGRINE Worsthorne has been writing a weekly column for the *Sunday Telegraph* ever since the paper was founded. But whereas he used to address the great issues of the day, now, in his dotage, he seems to have narrowed his field of vision.

The man who fancied himself as the Edmund Burke *de nos jours* has turned into Charles Pooter, the risibly self-absorbed hero of *The Diary of a Nobody*. Where once he fought the Cold War and blew the trumpet for right-wing Toryism, today he treats us to humdrum bulletins about his little outings with his new wife, Lady Lucy Lambton, complete with detailed accounts of their meals, hotel bedrooms, etc.

This year there has been an additional excitement: the appearance of his very own *Diary of a Nobody*, an autobiography called *Tricks of Memory*. To judge by his columns in recent months, Sir Peregrine believes its publication to be the most interesting event of our times:

18 July: Flying to New York, Worsthorne has his journey spoilt by "a loutish giant of a rabbi" who "literally elbowed my wife Lucy aside, and trod on her feet, in his hurry to get off the plane at Kennedy airport". Good spirits are restored when they reach their hotel room, which costs only $250 for two nights, "including coffee and — joy of joys for Lucy — cinnamon, choc and regular doughnuts".

25 July: Still in America, by now ensconced in "the Mohonk Mountain House Hotel in the Catskills, where Lucy and I spent a blissful week". The happy couple breakfast every morning "in rocking chairs on our balcony on the top floor of the central tower"; the food is excellent, "as was the room service".

1 August: Worsthorne's bliss is once again spoilt by someone's rudeness to his wife: at an American dinner party "Lucy was unfortunate enough to sit next to a rather... pompous American dignitary, with whom she had the following exchange. Lucy: 'Oh, do look at that firefly. Isn't he clever?' Dignitary (somewhat irritably): 'Why do you call it clever?' Lucy: 'Well, I bet you couldn't light up your behind, could you?' ".

8 August: On to Michigan, where Lucy and Perry have a "memorable stay" at a hotel near Grand Rapids: "Our bedroom was a feast of mahogany. Not only was the bed a four-poster but so, too, was the bath, festooned with lace drapes. Even the cupboard above the washbasin was authentically Victorian..."

15 August: Worsthorne returns from America to a pile of letters from readers "who regret that I have given up punditry for a more personal diary-style column." He half-agrees: "I may have to revert to pontificating soon, if only to escape the charge, also awaiting me on my return, that I am in danger of becoming an egotistical show-off interested only in myself or, at best, my wife and dogs". To disprove the charge of egotism, he adds a plug for his forthcoming autobiography, "due to be published this autumn".

19 September: The *Sunday Telegraph* begins serialising Perry's memoirs. Meanwhile, he reveals the fascinating news that until the previous Saturday he had never attended the last night of the Proms. "Nor had my wife, Lucy. We had both often seen it on television, but never before in the flesh. So when the invitation arrived from the director-general of the BBC and Jane Birt to join them in their box, we were delighted to accept, Lucy even more so than I since years ago she acquired exactly the right dress to wear — a clown's handpainted silk Union Jack concoction bought for £2 from a junk shop in the Portobello Road. In the event, we were not disappointed."

10 October: Time to puff the book again. "If Mr Major was relieved to hear that Lady Thatcher had postponed publishing her memoirs until after the Tory Party conference, so, for less important reasons, was I. For the postponement meant that I could get mine, *Tricks of Memory*, out first." He also mentions that he is "signing copies in various London bookshops".

17 October: Apparently forgetting his own signing sessions, Worsthorne castigates Lady Thatcher for "huckstering around", "brazenly" attempting to promote her memoirs.

24 October: Worsthorne has an "unexpectedly agreeable" visit to Liverpool. Not only does he appear on Granada TV's *This Morning* ("to promote my autobiography", in case we hadn't guessed), but also "Lucy and I were put up for the night before the broadcast in a lovely hotel... our room, the size of a small barn, contained not only a vast mahogany four-poster bed but also an equally vast mahogany four-poster jacuzzi, both of which were draped in tapestry".

7 November: Off to Scotland, where "*The Scotsman* had invited me to speak about my autobiography at one of its Edinburgh literary lunches. All went well. Or so I thought. Certainly the guests who bought *Tricks of Memory* afterwards seemed to enjoy the speech." Once again, however, the outing is marred by a slight to his wife. Having arranged to rent an automatic car, they are told by Hertz that they must have one with manual gears — "which Lucy hates to drive, at any rate for long distances, because she has housemaid's knee. Needless to say, I was indignant at this mix-up."

14 November: The hot topic of the moment is the blackballing of Jeremy Paxman from the Garrick Club. "Being a journalist myself, I naturally regret it. Such awkward squad types appeal to me no end." Presumably Worsthorne has forgotten that in his column on 20 June he denounced the "sneering, adversarial kind of confidence so depressingly embodied and exemplified by Jeremy Paxman on *Newsnight*".

21 November: Sir Peregrine is unhappy with the government's "Back to Basics" campaign. "The effect of highlighting the social cost of single mothers was bound to encourage, even provoke, scapegoating. The impression was given, quite unmistakably, that single mothers were bad news, anti-social elements, a danger to society. Yuck."

5 December: Just two weeks on, Worsthorne proceeds to give the impression, quite unmistakably, that single mothers are indeed bad news and a danger to society: "More adultery unquestionably means more divorce and therefore more children brought up in single-parent families. Surely it stands to reason that this could be a factor in the increase in crime." The entire column is given over to a stern rant about sexual infidelity ("an avalanche of falling moral standards... sexual promiscuity *is* a threat... Adultery darkens more lives, causes more tragedy, than murder ever does"). Adulterers, he concludes piously, are "evil".

How odd. For in *Tricks of Memory* Worsthorne reveals that he was continually unfaithful to his first wife Claudie, throughout their long marriage. He must assume, probably rightly, that in spite of his relentless promotion of the autobiography few *Sunday Telegraph* readers will have bought it.

LUVVIES

I take Mr Blobby just as seriously as Shakespeare. In fact I think it's harder to do Mr Blobby than Shakespeare.

MR BLOBBY (Barry Killerby)
The Sun

Submitted by Francis Harvey.

An occasional column devoted to the acting profession. £10 paid for entries

"And this one's from the cat"

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

BIRMINGHAM

BIRMINGHAM'S hideously ugly city centre is set to stay that way while 600 shops and businesses remain blighted by compulsory purchase orders (CPOs).

The disgusting Bull Ring has been waiting for a promised £500 million redevelopment by the London and Edinburgh Trust (LET) for too long to remember. LET courted councillors and planners so persuasively with the bait of a huge development that they spent hundreds of thousands of pounds on planning inquiries, CPOs and the like — all at LET's behest.

Sadly Birmingham appears not to have done its homework on LET, which was set up by Harrow-educated brothers John and Peter Beckwith. Soon after persuading the Birmingham city council to back their grandiose schemes, they sold out for a profit of £40 million each to a Swedish pension fund, SPP.

SPP was very enthusiastic about the Birmingham scheme and was convinced it was on to a winner — until LET crashed into debt. This year alone its losses were £450 million. No doubt to the chagrin of its pensioners, SPP has so far coughed up £900 million.

Clues to the muddled marketing and thinking were available to anyone with eyes to see just a few hundred yards away — at the ridiculous Arcadian shopping centre, started under the Beckwiths, which remains half empty and deserted with several traders bankrupt.

Now that LET has postponed the Bull Ring scheme indefinitely, retailers, market traders and businesses will remain blighted until another developer is found. This is a strangely familiar pattern for LET.

The London borough of Richmond, for example, has experienced similar problems after the Beckwiths demolished Richmond's famous ice rink and promised to build 250 luxury flats. Now they have sold LET and the ridiculous economics of the project have become apparent. The site remains derelict and looks set to stay that way.

NEW light is shed on Birmingham's Harambee Housing Association in a bundle of internal documents obtained by the *Eye*.

Harambee is meant to provide housing for 400 vulnerable Afro-Caribbeans, especially the elderly and mentally ill, and over the years has obtained £8 million from the Housing Corporation to buy property.

The *Eye* has detailed the unpaid bills, missing rents and mortgage payments totalling £250,000 which led the Housing Corporation to sack the committee. An inquiry by QC Patricia Scotland recently saw chairman Nancy Johnson sacked, too.

New documents reveal more details of where money went, including:

- Expenses claims of £5,000 by Johnson for "supervising trainee social workers" — even though she also held a full-time £42,000-a-year job as head of Birmingham city council's women's unit.
- A full-time salary paid to Johnson's friend, Yvonne McEwan, even though she too had a full-time post as an officer in charge of Birmingham's notorious Highgate Close children's home.

A new committee appointed by the Housing Corporation also had to sack Johnson's son, Errol, and McEwan's partner, Viv Allen, both employed as care assistants, after allegations of violence and theft against residents.

RHONDDA

SOME councils will go to amazing lengths to annoy their residents.

Devout Labour Rhondda, in the Welsh valleys, appears to be taking out its frustration at the closure of its coal mines by unduly harassing a young couple, Steven and Helena McPartland, who own a property the council wants to knock down.

The McPartlands have spent £50,000 turning the former Tabernacle chapel in Ferndale, Mid Glamorgan, into their family home, despite four years of hostility from Rhondda's planners.

First councillors delayed the McPartlands' planning proposals by 12 months. Then they demanded that the couple provide a level of amenities not asked of other applicants, even though the McPartlands had landscaped the site, creating new gardens and stone walls.

In October, the couple learnt to their horror — via an article in the *Rhondda Leader* newspaper — that the council wants to knock down the chapel, claiming it is in a dangerous state of disrepair. Naturally, no such pronouncements have been made about the various dilapidated public buildings dotted around the Rhondda. Letters of protest to the paper went unacknowledged, but then again the council places more advertising in the *Leader* than do the McPartlands.

The McPartlands have written to the local government ombudsman detailing 17 cases of alleged council maladministration. The council, meanwhile, is taking the couple to court for failing to fill out a form allowing the demolition of their home.

STRATHCLYDE

THE GHOST of Cap'n Bob haunts abolition-threatened Strathclyde, Britain's biggest borough, where ruling Labour councillors have borrowed £35.7 million from their employees' pension fund to balance the books.

This contentious piece of accounting procedure occurred without any consultation between the Labour-appointed fund managers and representatives of the 100,000-strong workforce, and nor has any mention been made of how much interest will be paid on the "loan".

Moreover, each £100 of monthly pension invested by Strathclyde 10 years ago is now worth £158. A similar sum deposited in most building societies would be worth a lot more: £189.

HARROGATE

HARROGATE council's housing department and North Yorkshire social services are still ignoring the needs of some of their neediest tenants.

Between them they have been ordered to pay £1,300 compensation to a severely disabled man who waited two and a half years for adaptations to his home enabling him, among other things, to use his toilet.

The ombudsman found both authorities guilty of maladministration on several counts. The case arose under the chronically sick and disabled persons act of 1970, which obliges social services authorities to provide help if it is deemed necessary.

Both councils should have known that, however, for in 1982 they were both found guilty of maladministration for failing to provide a stair-lift giving a disabled woman access to her toilet and bathroom. The woman died before the alterations were made, and by her deathbed was a letter to her social worker stating that she wished to complain to the ombudsman if the stair-lift was not installed within two months. Her letter concluded: "If all else fails, a bomb may be of more help." Clearly, neither council got the message.

NORTH CORNWALL

NEMESIS awaits North Cornwall, a nest of nepotism and home to scores of controversial planning battles over the last five years.

The independent authority has until February to respond to 56 recommendations from public inquiry inspector Audrey Lees. Lees' 18-month investigation was ordered by environment secretary Michael Howard after councillors broke almost every rule in the planning book.

Chaotic procedures led to local beauty spots being concreted over with inappropriate developments, guidelines laid down by Cornwall county council being ignored, planning policy being made on the spot and — worst of all — councillors awarding themselves planning permission for new homes without declaring an interest or leaving the room. *In one year, 13 applications made by members of the planning committee and their relatives went through regardless of their consequence on the environment.*

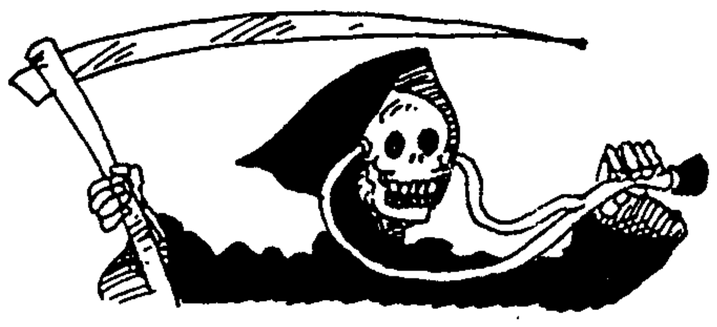
North Cornwall's catalogue of incompetence has been so outrageous that environment minister David Curry has gone on record to say there has never been a worse example of planning department incompetence. The Lees report has been sent to the country's town halls as an example of how *not* to manage the planning system.

BENT

THE hopes of Britain's barmiest borough to twin itself with a foreign local authority have been hilariously dashed.

Incredibly, the celebrated Italian city of Genoa (motto: *Genoa La Superba* — the proud) actually agreed to get into bed with Bent. But the deal is now off after Genoa's communist mayor resigned amid charges of corruption! Ho ho ho...

HUSBAND
Oh wow! Great, I love Christmas morning!
Brilliant! Just what I wanted!
NINTENDO
Who the hell are you?! Annie, quick call the police



DOING THE ROUNDS

THE crisis at Merseyside's Alder Hey, the biggest children's hospital in Europe, continues, with two sets of parents now staging sit-ins because their children have had hole-in-the-heart operations cancelled at the last minute.

The hospital authorities blame an increase in admissions of children suffering chest infections for the delays, but parents see it as another example of cost-cutting to balance next year's hospital trust budget.

The Shaw family, whose 11-month-old daughter Rebecca's heart operation has been cancelled twice so far, are joining a long line of outraged parents considering legal action against the increasingly inept trust management team.

Pearce "Piss" Butler, Alder Hey's chief executive until a week ago, has now jumped ship to his new job on the **Wirral**. His replacement is yet to be appointed, but there will be no shortage of applicants since the chief's salary has just been jacked up by 33 percent.

● **SURREY FHSA** has circulated a magazine to every home in the county with the headline "GPs take control of their purse strings — everyone benefits" and a direct phoneline to the FHSA's fundholding manager.

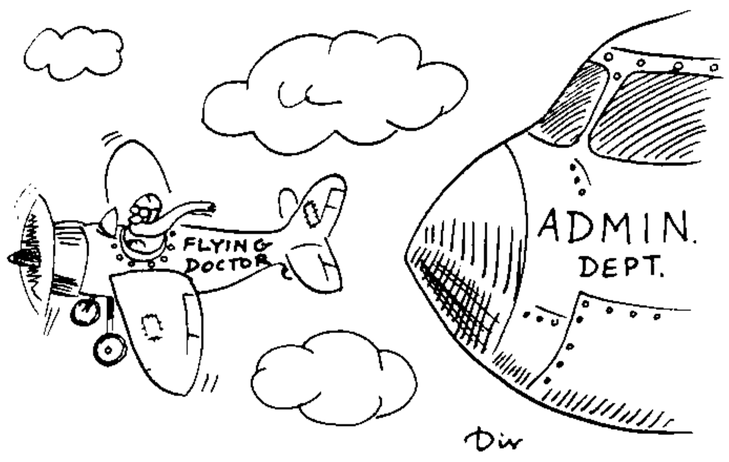
A patient who phoned up was told: "If you are happy with your (non-fundholding) GP, stay with him. But if you are dissatisfied or need specialist services, switch to a fundholder. Fundholding is like having a service contract for your washing machine. It cuts down bureaucracy. The press likes to say it creates a two-tier system but that's not true."

The benefits of GP fundholding don't just apply to the patients. A recent survey of more than 700 GPs revealed that 36 percent of fundholders earn more than £50,000 pre-tax net NHS income, compared with 16 percent of non-fundholders. Conversely, 31 percent of non-fundholders earn less than £35,000 compared to 15 percent of fundholders.

● BILL FYFE has resigned as chairman of **Greater Glasgow health board** less than one month after he sacked general manager Laurence Peterken. Meanwhile Richard Sage, director of **Belmont Air and Road Ambulance**, has been arrested by the fraud squad after allegedly relieving St Thomas's hospital of £600,000.

● DOCTORS at **Kidderminster general hospital** have gone public about the effects of reforms on their hospital. "As senior clinicians we have experienced a process which forces upon us almost daily changes with little time for thought or serious consideration as to how these changes will affect patient care. We feel there is worse to come."

● MARTIN JEFFREE, consultant neurologist at **London's Brook general hospital** (part of **Greenwich healthcare trust**) has written to finance director Lewis Charles expressing concern about the £400,000 secondhand MRI scanner



bought by management without expert advice (*Eye* 826). "The machine is electrically unsafe, it cannot produce hard copy, the head coil does not perform the manufacturer's specification and there are no lumbar or cervical spine coils." In the six months since its arrival, it has not scanned a single patient.

● THE absurdities of the medical complaints procedure are highlighted by the case of Dr Bridget O'Connell, a consultant paediatrician who was suspended on full pay from **King George hospital, Ilford** in December 1982 after claims that she had difficulty working with colleagues.

North East Thames regional health authority (NETRHA) responded swiftly; in October (1988) it was "within weeks" of resolving the issue. In March (1991) a preliminary high court hearing was held, followed by a further hearing in November (1993) at which it was decided that another hearing was needed. No date was set. The 11-year saga has so far cost the taxpayer over £1 million. As a NETRHA spokesman put it: "It's a very complicated case."

● **BRENT and Harrow health authority** has decided to ditch the word "complaint" from its vocabulary. As chief executive Mary Whitty put it: "We are looking for a different kind of word that isn't so negative. Complaint can be a misleading term because people are not always expressing dissatisfaction but perhaps more of an observation. They might even be asking for our help." Between April and October, Ms Whitty received 28 observations and requests for help.

● THE 1992-1993 annual report for **Bath's Royal United hospital (RUH)** contained a glowing statement from chairman William Collins: "We are especially proud to report that during our first year as a trust we have improved patient care by developing centres of excellence to national and international standards."

On 25 November last, a certain Mr William Collins had a minor problem sorted out — not at the internationally excellent RUH but up the hill at the private Bath clinic. During his stay, he may have had time to reflect on "The patients' view", a collection of "requests for help" from RUH inpatients. Compared to other hospitals surveyed, fewer patients were satisfied with their room or ward and more described the standards of cleanliness, hygiene and comfort they experienced as poor or very poor.

● FULL details of the **NHS management executive's** leadership awards for hospital general managers (*Eye* 834) have now reached the *Eye*. Those who have a nomination should jot it down with a list of achievements ("please keep this to a single page") and send it to Sir Duncan Nichol, Room 4W23, Quarry House, Quarry Hill, Leeds LS2 7UE. The lucky nominee will then be visited by Sir James Savile and representatives from BT, McDonalds, Marks & Spencer, Thomas Cook and the Virgin Group.

M.D.

LEGAL NEWS

BARONESS Thatcher is not the only Thatcherite having to account for her relations with the Iraqis.

While she was at the Scott inquiry last week, lawyers for a British journalist were drafting a stiff letter to her former PR guru Sir Tim Bell, demanding redress for an alleged libel in a press release put out by Sir Tim's firm earlier this year.

The press release was issued by Lowe Bell Communications on behalf of Crescent Petroleum, a company based in Sharjah which, until the invasion of Kuwait, had close business ties with Saddam's regime. Crescent is owned by Iraqi-born Hamid Jafar, whose brother, Dr Jafar Jafar, is the head of Baghdad's atomic bomb programme.

Crescent does not like publicity. Last year it brought a libel suit against Alan George, a freelance hack specialising in Middle Eastern matters, after he wrote how Crescent had been involved in a deal — blocked by UN sanctions — under which Iraq would have gained control of the US oil company Fina. In February this year the case was thrown out by the high court.

Crescent then employed Lowe Bell to put out a bizarre press release, claiming that the oil company was "the victim of a campaign of smear and innuendo". The document carried a series of statements and denials: "It has been alleged or implied that Crescent Petroleum is an agent for the government of Iraq. This is not true. It has been alleged or implied that Crescent Petroleum has been involved in arms procurement, weapons development or other kinds of military activity. This is not true." And so on.

All this was rather odd, since no one had alleged or implied any such thing. Equally odd was Lowe Bell's statement that Crescent "welcomes the apologies published by various newspapers, including *The Guardian*, *The Observer* and *The Calgary Herald*." In effect, Bell was claiming that these publications had been part of the "campaign of smear and innuendo".

Evidently no one had told Sir Tim that the story in the *Observer* and the *Calgary Herald* was the selfsame piece by Alan George, which just days before had been declared free of "smear and innuendo" by Mr Justice Drake at the high court.

Sir Tim may shortly be discussing the matter with Crescent's lawyers, the London firm Clifford Chance, whose senior partner, Jeremy Carver, has had a long and cordial relationship with Hamid Jafar. Until 30 November 1990, Clifford Chance's London staff included Sadiq Jafar, Hamid's nephew and the son of the Iraqi nuclear weapons boss. Since then, Sadiq has been on secondment to Crescent, although staying on the Clifford Chance payroll.

Ironically enough, Clifford Chance's other clients include the Kuwaiti government. Jeremy Carver supervises that account too.

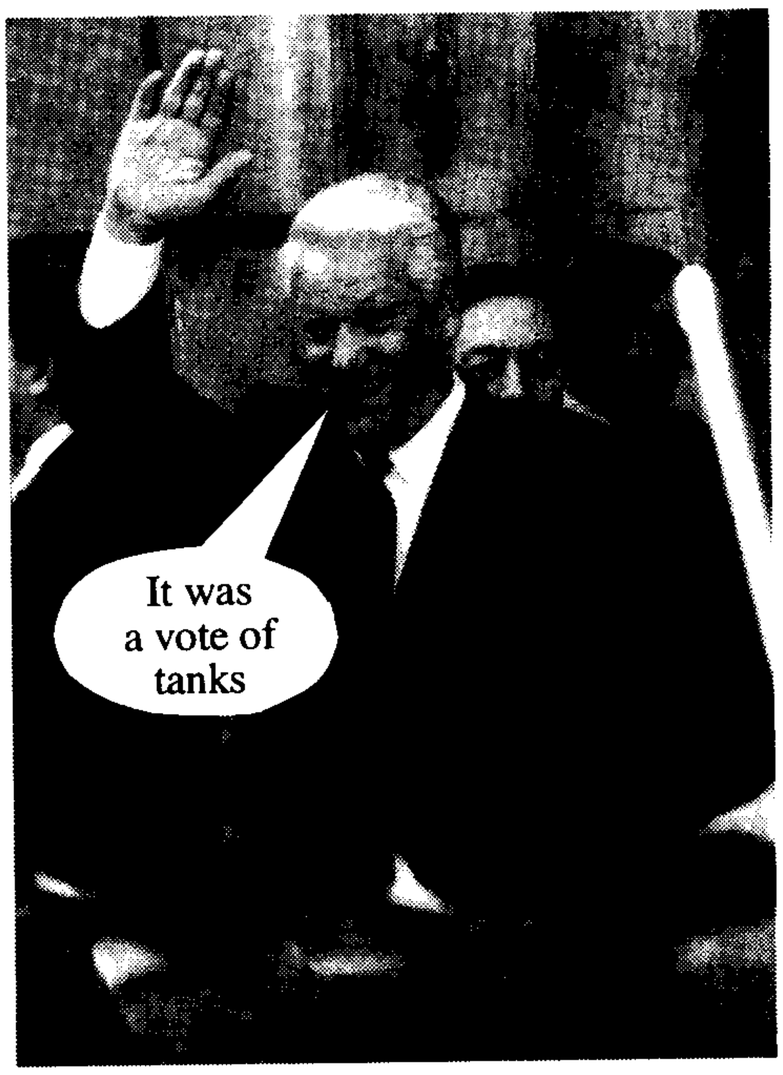
RODGER PANNONE, the Manchester-based solicitor and president of the Law Society, recently received an honorary degree at the opening ceremony of the new Nottingham law school.

In his speech of acceptance, Pannone criticised chancellor of the exchequer Kenneth Clarke for suggesting in his budget speech that bus drivers should not pay taxes so that lawyers could receive state funding for their professional education.

Pannone thought this a bit rich given that Clarke himself had benefited from state assistance (an LEA scholarship to the fee-paying Nottingham high school and a grant-assisted place at Cambridge university). He suggested that the reason bus drivers should contribute to such funding was so the sons and daughters of bus drivers might become lawyers.

Sir David White, chairman of the governors of the university, is a businessman and magistrate who owes his position to Tory party patronage, and he apparently found Pannone's comment unpalatable. Approached by the *Eye*, Pannone would not confirm or deny the suggestion that Sir David had asked him to omit the critical remarks from his speech or that university employee Julia Gunn was told to phone Conservative central office for clearance.

His answer was along the lines of: "You may say that... I couldn't possibly say that."



Letters

Blind ignorance?

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the coincidence of Mrs Thatcher not seeing the critical Westland correspondence and her not seeing the critical arms for Iraq correspondence?

Yours faithfully,
SCEPTICAL,

Chelmsford, Essex.

Lookalike

Soames

Controller

Sir,

Has anyone else noticed the similarity between Nicholas Soames and The Fat Controller — are they perchance related?

GILBERT DUNLOP,

London EC2.

Huff and puff

Sir,

As James Whitaker's co-author I was highly amused at your story about our book DIANA v CHARLES.

However, at the risk of ruining a perfectly good tale may I gently point out that, contrary to your estimate, nowhere near 150,000 copies of the hardback were printed. And early figures show that in a logjammed market DIANA v CHARLES *outsold all its competitors, including Dempster, Holden, Wislon and "Lady Colin" Campbell.*

It even made an appearance in the WASHINGTON POST *bestsellers list.*

An ideal Christmas present, highly recommended.

Yours sincerely,
CHRISTOPHER WILSON,

Cottonworth, nr Andover, Hants.

Hello!

Sir,

I have just read Lynn Barber's column in the SUNDAY TIMES. *I was under the impression that the Hallo! column was, er... in the style of? Unless her comments had something to do with Hackwatch (No. 834).*

Anyway keep the boot firmly in. I have read the EYE *with great pleasure for about 10 years, please pop my name onto the subscribers lists.*

Yuletide felicitations etc.,
JULIAN BURGESS,

Torksey, Lincoln.

Poet's corner

Sir,
"To Bookworm"
Your view that all poetry's guff,
At least the modern British stuff,
Is fair enough.

In the lists most publishers puff
The lines are fine and dry as snuff,
Too true. But if
The branch is sick, the roots are tough.

Yrs fflly,
JOHN GIBBENS,

London N4.

Synod the times

Sir,

Re: Major's Core Values, 19/11/93.

Although Choral Evensong may be in terminal decline in the C of E (what isn't?) the BBC still broadcasts it.

On Wednesday afternoons one can still tune into Radio Three and listen to that ancient concert (sorry service) and ignore for an hour the synod, the ASB and women priests.

Although ominously this trinity of usurpation could well be Choral Evensong's downfall. A heap of old rubbish indeed!

Yours faithfully,
DAVID ACKERMAN,

Westminster College, Oxford.

Spalding links?

Sir,

There are so many things wrong in your little piece about me that I could be forgiven for thinking that it was written by a certain local critic who is the only person I have ever forbidden my staff to speak to (except via my press office) because she keeps on getting so many things wrong.

We have nothing to hide from the responsible press and are, in museum terms, exceptionally open about our gains and losses. And I'm not "balding".

Isn't it great that the new Gallery of Scottish Art is coming to Glasgow?

Yours, with the greatest respect,
JULIAN SPALDING,

Director, Art Gallery and Museum, Kelvingrove, Glasgow.

Go away Nokes

Sir,

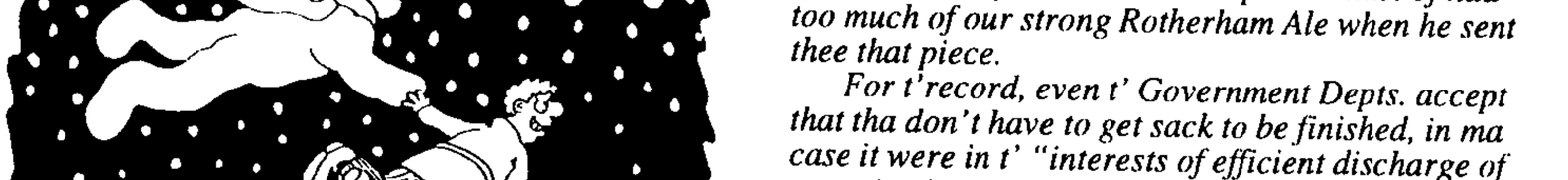
The criticism of Princess Diana in Hallo column is completely misplaced.

Surely her emotionally charged comment on witnessing tragic street scenes in Calcutta does not imply that she will allow opportunist toe rags to trample on her dignity with impunity?

Show some real courage. Vigorously defend that literary masterpiece of Salman Rushdie. Substitute "Those awful Iatolas" for the distasteful "LIZ". I bet Lord Gnome would be kebabbed for Xmas.

Yours faithfully,
N. NOKES,

Whitley Bay.



NOTICE BORES

The Evening Standard Drama Awards

Best Play: ARCADIA by Tom Stoppard

Evening Standard critic Nicholas de Jongh:

"Such simple concepts so pretentiously arrayed."

"Son, it's time you knew... there's no such thing as Father"

Regional accent

Sir,

You referred in EYE *833 to a Rochdale resident being "on t'dole". Had he lived in London, would you have described him as being "on ver dough"? I don't think so.*

Yn Gywir,
HUW Ll. ROBERTS,

Yr Wyddgrug, Clwyd.

A northerner writes...

Ey up maister Gnome,

Ah were reet chuffed up when ah were told ah were in thi journal, ah near broke me neck getting home to read ma copy, then ah wer reet gobsmacked!

Ah can only think that tha reporter must of had too much of our strong Rotherham Ale when he sent thee that piece.

For t'record, even t' Government Depts. accept that tha don't have to get sack to be finished, in ma case it were in t' "interests of efficient discharge of organisations duties". It took me three months to get a job (two when ah knew ah were going and one after on t'dole).

Ah'm noan t'manager just a serf, job is only for two year then ah'm looking again, and ah had to quit as President o't'Party because job is "Politically restricted", that were two month ago! If ma wife could have got me a job it would have been a better one nor this, permanent and nearer wot ah used to earn.

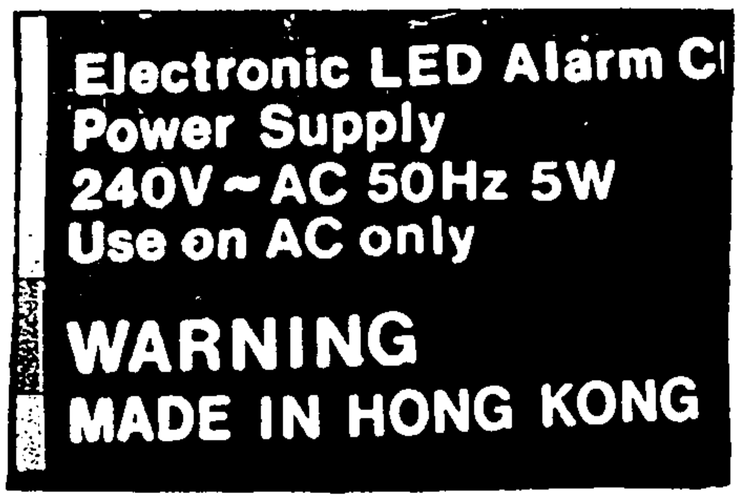
Ee's also got me age wrong but worst of all... t'ROTHERHAM ADVERTISER *pro Labour! If they're pro Labour them I'm a banana! (Ah think someone said that before me.)*

Still 'e did spell me name reet!

Yours fraternally,
"RED" KEN FURNELL,

Rotherham.

I-SPY



Submitted by Mike Peters. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Tol-story

Sir,

Since Lord Aldington (EYE *834) is so keen to draw attention to the details of what he said to Count Tolstoy's counsel during the infamous libel "trial" of 1989, it is worth recalling another striking passage from the transcript.*

This is Day 10, 23C, and the court has been hearing Aldington contradict a claim he had made in earlier evidence to the effect that he had dined with Anthony Eden on two particular occasions which supported his claim that he had left Austria before the order was given by his headquarters to shoot Cossacks who tried to escape forcible repatriation.

Tolstoy's counsel surprised the court by producing Anthony Eden's diary which showed that the two dinners had never taken place. Aldington suddenly pleads faulty memory but Tolstoy's counsel presses him and suggests that the story of the two dinners was "an invention to give colour to your account [of your departure date]".

In Lord Aldington's words (under oath): "What we have been talking about now as I understand it, is proof that I am always a liar because I lied about some dinners with Mr Eden. That is as I understand it."

Yours faithfully,
IAN MITCHELL,

Lagavulin, Isle of Islay.

Lookalike

W.F. Deedes

Gen. Aidid

Sir,

I wonder if these two gentlemen are related? Their faces and names are very similar!

Yours sincerely,
P.J. BOASE,

Chelwood Gate, Sussex.

Abusive sabs

Sir,

Every so often a friend brings me her old copies of PRIVATE EYE *which I have to admit I don't usually bother to read. However, I've just glanced through two copies and noticed the Hunt News. This quite interested me because last week, on my way to visit friends, I found myself trapped on a quiet country road by between 20-30 of these hunt saboteurs.*

Perhaps my old Barbour made them think I was out with the hunt. Whatever the reason they would not let me pass, instead surrounding my car and shouting abuse. Being only 5ft tall and the wrong side of forty I was terrified. It was only when a lorry came up behind me that they got out of the way and let me go.

Some wore masks, others carried sticks. If this is the normal way they behave then I'm not surprised they get clouted from time to time. If I'd been a foot taller and 20 years younger I'd have given one or two a thick ear myself.

On our local TV news last week we were told that there were 58 court cases outstanding against hunt saboteurs. How about an article or two telling us what they have been up to? After my experience last week I wouldn't think they were arrested for stealing sweeties.

Yours faithfully,
MRS NAOMI SMITH,

Bucks.

Rounds of applause

Sir,

A wide spectrum of society who wisely take out a subscription to PRIVATE EYE *anticipate each new issue but for one person it is like life itself. How else would Bottomley know what is going on in the health service?*

Yours etc.,
ARTHUR S. HUTCHINGS,

Havant, Hants.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"Mancini seems to have ten yards under his shorts."

RAY WILKINS, Channel 4
(David Stevens)

"Teenage orphans are to be given a say in their future. Health Secretary Virginia Bottomley has announced new legislation that will allow them to stay in touch with their natural parents."

Sky News Headlines on Virgin 1215
(Pete Coombs)

"This is Major's last desperate throw of the dice and we will ensure it scores a double blank."

JACK STRAW, ITV Teletext
(J. Stewart)

"You can't beat the tidal wave when the avalanche comes down the mountain."

ROBERT KILROY-SILK, BBC1
(Brian Collett)

HOM SAP

BY DAVID AUSTIN

Letter from **Nigeria**

from Our Own Correspondent

THE LONG overdue removal of Ibrahim Babengida, our former president, leaves Nigeria — Africa's largest and wealthiest nation — in economic and political chaos.

Despite the "election", military dictatorship has been restored. The new despot, General Sani Abacha, engineered two military coups in the 1980s and is no better than Babengida. The reason for the catastrophe is simple: corruption.

Nigeria was once the showpiece of the British Commonwealth in Africa, endowed with more than three million barrels a day of the world's best crude oil. By 1986 this oil wealth had produced N$100 billion in revenue — seemingly an impregnable base from which to modernise, feed, educate and enrich the citizens.

But the money has vanished and the long-suffering people remain impoverished. The truth is that we have been ruined and plundered by a gang of trigger-happy crooks led by a semi-educated tank officer.

The main problem has always been President Babengida's greed and those who manipulated him. He handed over most of the nation's oil to middlemen. This was done by pricing the vital crude below the market rate to ensure large commissions. Marc Rich, the fugitive oil trader who is wanted by the US authorities for fraud and massive tax evasion, was the main beneficiary, along with his London associates.

Rich, who is banned in almost every other OPEC country, was the Nigerian oil company's main trader. His speciality was using front companies to conduct his business. They included Ampol Ltd (coordinated by Charles Irving in London), Daewoo Ltd, Inter-Petrol Ltd and Tin Trade International Ltd (a Jersey company).

The most celebrated case was the conviction and imprisonment of Tam David-West, our former petroleum minister, for corruptly enriching the Stinnes Oil company to the tune of N$420 million. And last month Edmund Dakouro, former managing director of the Nigerian National Petroleum Company and seconded by Shell Oil, was arrested for alleged fraud and misappropriation of funds.

Then there is Babengida's private Swiss banker, Gabriel Katri. Katri's bank, Multi-Commercial of Geneva, and his company, GK Finance, handled most of the former president's ill-begotten funds while he was the children's guardian. Katri also entertained Babengida's wife on his luxury yacht in the Mediterranean. Known as the First Lady, she was compared unfavourably with Imelda Marcos and Nancy Reagan.

In Nigeria only money talks. Babengida, known as the man with short arms and long pockets, thought he could prosper by choosing his old pal Abiola as the candidate in the election. Millions were put into ensuring Abiola "won" and some western nations and businessmen were silly enough to back him — despite knowing he was Babengida's man.

The prospect for democracy in Nigeria now looks as bleak as ever because the army officers are hostile. They were happy with Babengida's military rule. But they realise that if "democracy" is introduced their cupboard will soon be bare and their pockets empty. So they opposed Abiola and hence the riots and chaos.

It will be interesting to see what happens to Babengida, who receives so much hate mail that he refuses to leave his home. Nor will his army cronies allow him out until they see some of his vast fortune.

Meanwhile, a new junta has been set up with some familiar characteristics: torture, censorship, disappearance of political opponents, abolition of parliament etc. The old gang are back in town, all right.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

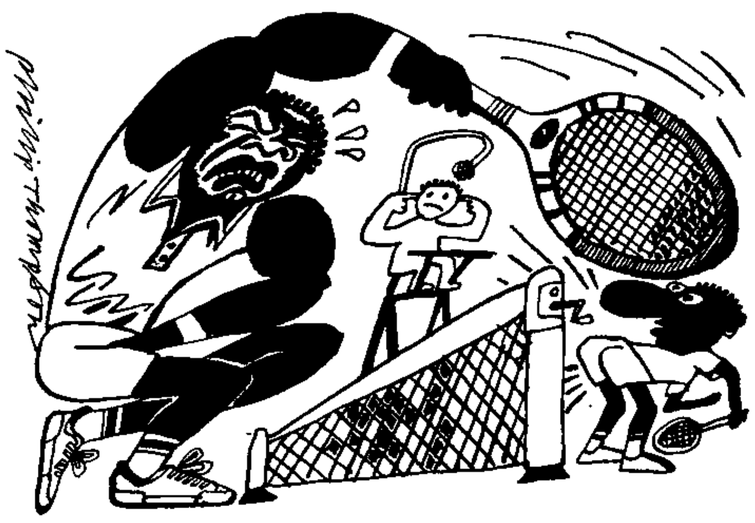
⊙ "When I told them I'd sold out of sleeping pills, the pensioners turned very vicious," pharmacist S.Y. Yue told a public enquiry in Jiangsu. "I couldn't understand it. They kept shouting that they must beat the deadline somehow, and that they needed the pills for an overdose. Then they head-butted my drug cabinet and rushed into the street, where they threw themselves in front of a passing lorry."

The enquiry was investigating the suicides of more than a hundred elderly people in Haian county, Jiangsu, after a government decree, issued on March 15, announced that cremation would be compulsory for anyone dying after April 1st. "Many old people believe that, if they are not buried, their ancestors will be insulted," said a government official, "so, during that fortnight, they were killing themselves in any way they could think of. Sleeping pills were most popular, but others were throwing themselves off bridges, drowning themselves in rivers, or hanging themselves. One old man who tried to gas himself caused a house fire, so he ended up being cremated anyway." *(South China Morning Post, 21/5/93. Spotter — Simon Chau)*

— ⊙ —

⊙ *"Let me tell you a few home truths about my opponent," Lighton Ndefwayl, the Medjian closed tennis champion, told reporters after unexpectedly losing in a two hour match.*

"Musumba Bwayla is a man who farts when he walks, and he is a hopeless player. He has a huge nose, several warts, and he is cross-eyed. Girls hate him, and women laugh at him. The reason he beat me is obvious. My jockstrap was too tight so that, whenever I tried to perform my legendary overarm smash, my eyes watered and I could no longer see the ball. Also, when Bwayla walks, he farts very loudly. He does it when he serves too, and that made me lose my concentration for which I am famous through Zambia. They do not allow such things at Wimbledon. The umpire has failed me. Official protests will follow." (The Star Tonight, 24/2/92. Spotter — Anthony Fenwick)



Compiled by
Victor Lewis-Smith

— ⊙ —

⊙ "I am not an evil man," Sipho William Mdletshe wept, as he gave a press conference to astonished journalists in Sebokeng hospital. "Why is it I should be punished so?"

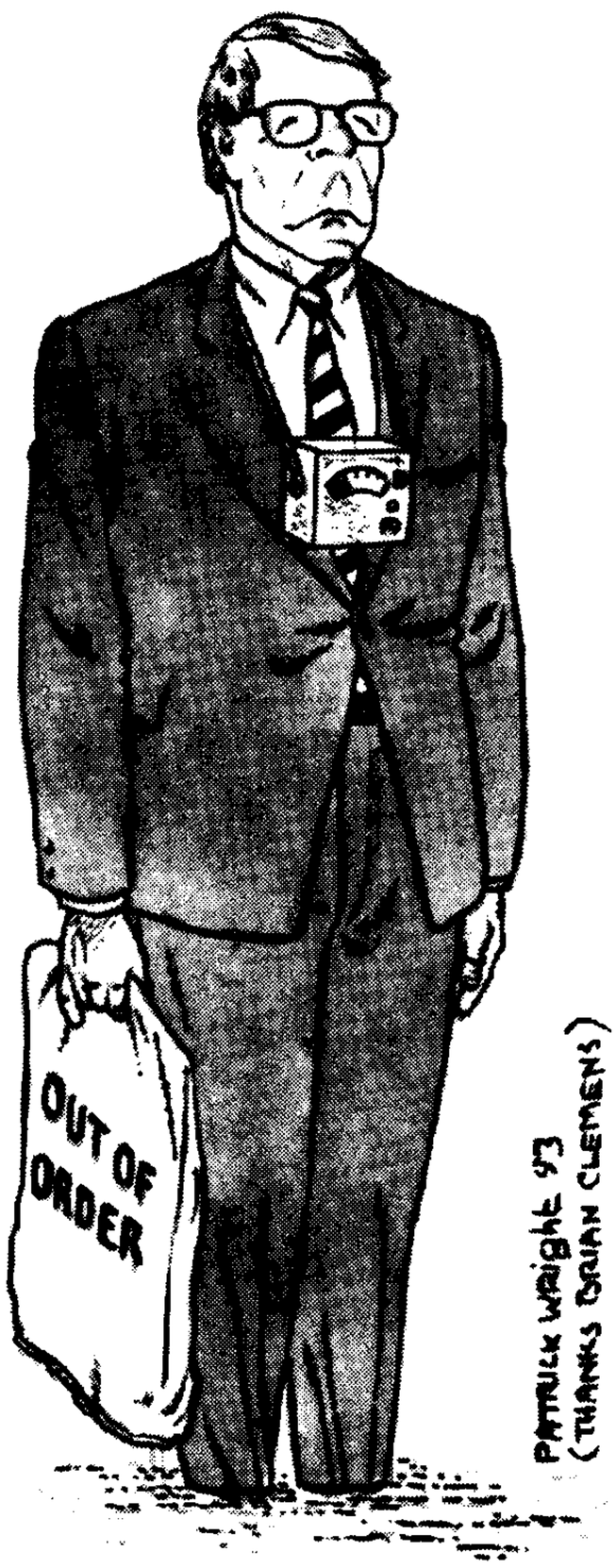
Mdletshe, an unemployed millet husker from Cape Town, was addressing the press, despite having been declared dead three days earlier. His lawyer, Isiah Sibanda, explained what had happened. "On Saturday, while Sipho was travelling with his girlfriend Kedibone in a taxi, there was a collision with a truck near Vereeniging, and he was flung across the road. There was no doctor available, but the taxi driver checked Sipho's pulse, pronounced him dead, and took him to Sharpeville mortuary."

Mdletshe continued the story. "I woke up inside a metal box on Sunday, freezing cold. At first I thought I was drunk and hallucinating, so I didn't worry and went back to sleep. When I realised I was trapped, I panicked and banged on the metal walls, but no one came, so eventually I went back to sleep again. Monday was a national holiday, so I slept on. But on Tuesday the mortuary workers finally came back to work, heard my screams and released me."

"But worse was to come. When I visited Kedibone to tell her I was still alive, she became hysterical, screamed that I was a zombie, and refused to let me have sexual intercourse with her. The police were called. I told them we were to be married in a fortnight, but she denied everything. Her father is now demanding the return of her wildebeest and, to top it all, the taxi driver still demands that I pay the full fare." *(Cape Times, 21/3/93. Spotter — Evan Harris)*

101 USES FOR A JOHN MAJOR (26)

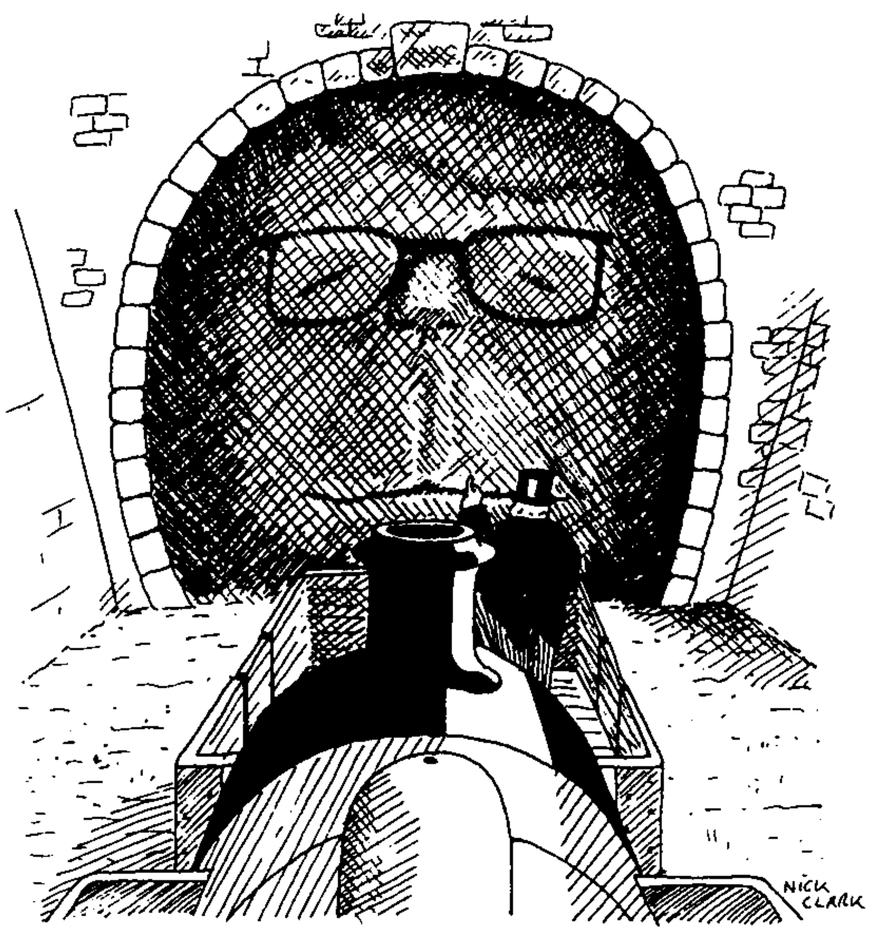
A PARKING METER



THOMAS

THE PRIVATISED TANK ENGINE

Tunnel Vision



"THERE'S something horrid in the tunnel!" wailed Selina the Sprinter Unit one afternoon.

"Oh, that'll be Jacko the Juggernaut trying out a new short cut," replied Thomas. "I'll soon flush him out." He uncoupled from Annie and Clarabel and puffed into the tunnel.

Seconds later he backed out at speed. "Robert Stephenson! There's a dogma blocking the tunnel!" he cried.

Even the Fat Controller was mortified. Selina became hysterical. "If the dogma doesn't go away our branch line will be isolated from the rest of the rail network. We'll starve. We're all going to die!"

The Fat Controller took charge. "Thomas, run along to that scrapyard and see if they've got any of those things left. What did we used to call them?"

"Trucks, sir?"

"Yes, that's it." And soon Thomas plunged into the tunnel again. This time he was pushing a truck, in which the Fat Controller stood bravely.

"Now listen here," the Fat Controller called into the gloom. "Most other countries are perfectly happy with nationalised railways."

"We will bring to the railways the considerable benefits of private enterprise," came the reply.

Thomas's driver said: "It must have escaped from Adam Smith's think-tank circus."

The Fat Controller tried again. "Your franchising system is going to fritter away millions of pounds on extra bureaucracy."

"We will make the rail network considerably more efficient," echoed the response.

"It's no good. I'll have to use the only language it understands," said the Fat Controller.

"Why don't we throw some cold water over it?" suggested the driver.

"Look here!" shouted the Fat Controller. "You're two apples short of a picnic! Public opinion does not support your franchising plan! Understand?"

There was a long silence, then the grey fog began to clear. "Bastards!" the tunnel echoed faintly, and Thomas thought he heard: "We're still going to cut your subsidy in half." Then at last there was light at the end of the tunnel.

Back at the station the Fat Controller announced: "We apologise for any inconvenience caused by the delay. This was due to a logic failure in the tunnel."

CHRISTMAS FILMS

HIGHLIGHTS

What to watch out for over the Festive Season — selected by Barry Normal, Barry Took and Barry Cryer.

BBC2 Christmas Eve 4.30pm

Le Gatt (1993)

First time on British TV. Epic French masterpiece by Jean Jacques Delors, starring Gerard Depardieu as a French film producer fighting off the wicked Americans by burning film reels on motorways and throwing the whole world into a new economic depression. *(375 hours)*

BBC1 Christmas Tuesday 6.00am

Mrs Fothergill Goes To India (1992)

Merchant Banker adaptation of E.M. Forster's classic unpublished novel about an unmarried governess (Vanessa Redgrave) who meets a young bride-to-be (Emma Thompson) on the P&O packet steamer to Khartoum. Exquisitely shot on location in Haslemere with fine supporting cameos by Anthony Hopkins as Captain McGuinness, Art Malik as the Dhobi Wallah Baddiel, and Hughie Grant as Cedric Campflower. *(3 hours, 25 minutes)*

ITV Boxing Thursday 9.00pm

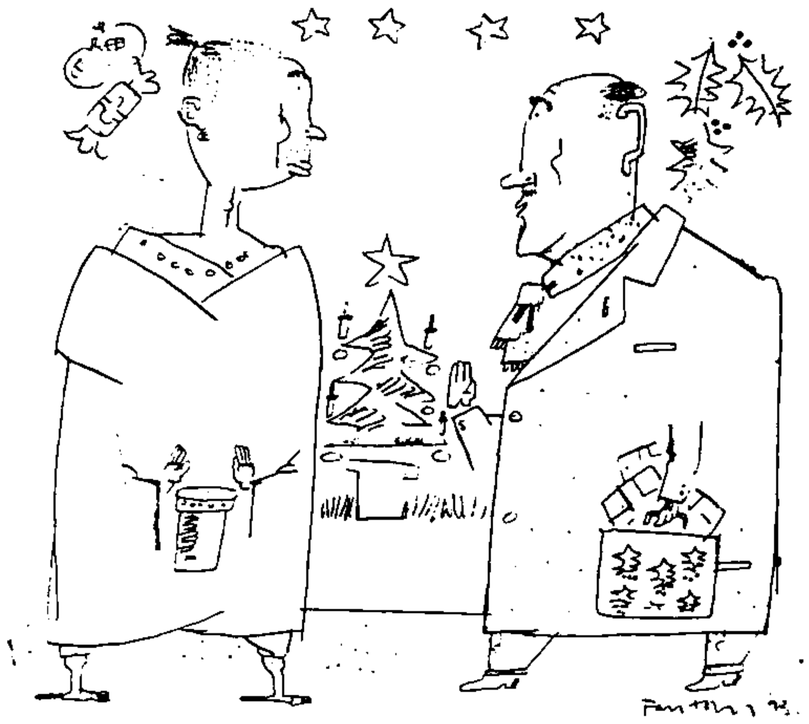
Night of the Paxman (1993)

Spielberg made-for-TV horror film set in London, England, about the members of an old-fashioned London club terrorised by a vicious apparition known as The Paxman. One by one they are driven mad by the Paxman's nightly visitations until finally they can take no more and form a lynching mob. Starring Tom Cruise as The Paxman, and Jason Robards as Sir Kingsley Worsthorne, Chairman of the Club Committee. *(1 hour, 25 minutes)*

Channel 4 New Year's Holiday Friday 4.30pm

They Flew to Bruges (1993)

Successful Disney adaptation of the World War II black and white classic. The animation is superb, particularly in the flying sequences, and the voice characterisation is outstanding. Robin Williams takes the David Niven role as Wing Commander Algy Simmington and Alan Bennet shines as the Mayor of Bruges, originally played by Fernandel. New songs by Tim Rice, including the single: "We're No Stooges, we're off to Bruges". *(That's enough rotten films for Christmas — Ed.)*



"And a very Hari Krishna to you, too"

PRIVATE EYE COMEDY AWARDS

An Eye competition for the least funny performance by a comedian in a TV advertisement. Closing date: 30 January 1994. Readers write in please with *your* votes!!

The shortlist is:

★ **John Cleese** and **Ronnie Corbett** for the portable phone one.

★ **Stephen Fry** for the Barsteward one.

★ **Rowan Atkinson** for the credit card one.

★ **Joanna Lumley** for all the ones she's in — particularly the gas one.

★ **Paul Merton** for the bath soap one.

★ **Rik Mayall** for the computer game one.

★ **Jack Dee** for the beer one.

★ **Harry Enfield** for the other phone one.

★ TV's **Angus Deayton** for the other beer one.

THE TOP COMEDY AWARDS THAT *YOU* DECIDE!!

WIZ
BY "CUTTER" PERKINS & RG J
GOODBYE/HELLO!
AH WANNA BE ALUURN, AN' HEOR'S AN ITINERARY A BEACHES WHERE AH'LL BE PRIVATE AN' BEST PLACES TA GET YAZ SNAPS A ME INA BIKINI!
CLICK!
FLASH!
CLICK!
WHIRR!
FWOARR!
ANOTHER BLOODY INTRUSION!
AT LAST! WE'VE PRIVATISED THE PUBLICITY BINGIN' BINT!
AYE PET!
VOWS DAILY
CHAZZA-A LYIN' TOE RAG?
CHURCH TIMES
GOD SAYS NO SHAGGIN' ADULTERERS FOR KING
INSIDE: BISHOP OF GALWAY FOR POPE?
IT'S A CHANCE FUR WOR CHAZZA TA MEK TH' FRONT PAGES FURRA CHANGE!
YA'S TOLD PORKIES TA'T LORD ON T' WEDDIN' DEE, LAD! YA NOT FIT TA BE KING!
IT DIVVENT COONT Y'BASTAAD!
I AM MADAM
AH HED WOR FINGAZZ CROSSED!
THEY DIVVENT WANT WOR CHAZZA, SO HOW A BOOT WILLS?
AH WOULDN'T MIND BENDIN' URVER FORRA KING WILLY, ME!
HUR! HUR!
I WANNA BE KING! ME! ME!!

This week's Honorary Degrees

TV's Mr Blobby *(above)* has been awarded an honorary Doctorate of Arts at the University of London at Potter's Bar (formerly North Enfield Polytechnic).

Also honoured were comedians Robert Newman and David Baddiel *(not pictured)*, who received doctorates in Moral Philosophy from the University of St Giles at Oxford (formerly the Oxford Secretarial College).

Russian Election Results in full

Vladivostock (South): Boris Gudenuv (pro-Yeltsin Reformist Democrat) 701; Boris Hitlerov (Imperialist Anti-Semitic Pro-Czar Kill All Deviants Party) 64; Boris Stalinov (Communist Pro-Lenin Bring Back Brezhnev Party) 63.

Reformist elected. Turnout 3%.

Omsk (Central): Ivan The Not-So-Bad (Reformist Yeltsinite Party) 2; Ra Ra Rasputin (I'm Still Alive, Bring Back Me Party) 7; Ivan The Really Terrible (Czarist Fascist Pro-Cossack Anti-Aldington Alliance) 6.

Rasputin elected.

(That's enough election results. Ed.)

Great Bores Of Today.

"... I mean comedy is the new rock 'n' roll it's incredible to think in the old days the alternatives played to ten people if they were lucky and now they can fill Wembley Arena how many people d'you think that is? ... 12,000? incredible isn't it? it's the new rock 'n' roll kids nowadays don't buy records they buy videos and watch them over and over and the two blokes *are* sex symbols well one of them is anyway which one is it? the one with the long hair or the one with glasses? anyway they're outrageous that joke they did where one of them says 'I don't give a toss' and the other one says 'I've just had one' is brilliant and their catchphrase is 'bollox' or something like that apparently they are both Oxford dons in real life but they decided to go into comedy because it's you know the new rock 'n' roll they are utterly brilliant it's almost frightening and now I've read they've split up or maybe they're just talking about it the pressure must be appalling to be superstars at that age did you see that programme about them? they'll be doing adverts next which will be great did you see Rik Mayall in the Nintendo ad? brilliant! no comedy *is* the new rock 'n' roll..."

Celeb

LIGGER

ANOTHER COCKY LETTER FROM SOME HOPEFUL, DEMANDING I GIVE THEM THEIR FIRST BREAK INTO THE MUSIC BIZ!
THE ARROGANCE AND IGNORANCE OF THESE PEOPLE NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME. WHY THE HELL SHOULD I HELP THEM?
THEY'RE SO NAIVE. GET ME A PEN. I'LL SOON CHANGE HIS TUNE.
AND CLAIM IT AS MY OWN.
IT MIGHT BE WISE TO ALTER THE LYRIC SLIGHTLY TOO, SIR...

The Secret Diary of John Major aged 47¾

Monday

Goodness me. I noticed this morning from my Price Waterhouse Advent Calendar that there are by no means a considerable number of days left to Christmas, i.e. not many. Here is my list of items that I would like, which I have put up on the Cabinet notice board for the information of my colleagues. They are:

1. A new set of biros (Rymans).

2. Notebooks, for listing names under various, i.e. Barmies, Bastards etc. (also from Rymans).

3. New ring-binder for holding when I am making an idiot of Mr Smith at question time (yes, Ryman again!).

4. Guess what book I do not want to be given by anyone! (Clue: it costs £25 and is written by a woman!)

5. Books I would like. My friend Jeffrey Archer's new novel called *Omnibus*. Jeffrey tells me it is his best yet. Also *Howzat! The Tim Rice Book of Cricket Anecdotes* by Tim Rice, and the new book by my favourite author Trollope, which has just come out.

6. A bottle of my favourite after-dinner drink, Bailey's Irish Cream, because I have been spending so much time recently in Dublin! In previous years I have been given this by my ex-friend Norma Lamont, so this year I am hoping someone will be kind enough to step in and fill the gap.

Tuesday

Today is a very historic day, the first ever pre-Christmas Budget. Like everyone else, I was expecting that my new friend Mr Clarke would have to put up taxes quite a lot because we are so much in debt. But, oh no! He did nothing of the sort. There were very loud cheers from our side when he said: "I see no need to put up income tax or VAT." In fact everyone was cheering so loudly that they didn't hear him say, "There's no need because I'm putting up the tax on petrol, cigarettes, insurance, holidays and mortgages instead, not to mention doubling the council tax." What a clever man Mr Clarke is. He has also got another brilliant idea for abolishing unemployment. In future the unemployed will all be called Jobseekers. "We are all Jobseekers, prime minister," he told me, "even those of us who have a job already" — and he gave me a funny smile.

Wednesday

Today I flew to Ireland to see my new friend Mr Reynolds. The Irish situation is very complicated, but luckily Mr Hurd was able to come too, so that he could explain the more difficult bits to me while we were having our summit meeting. As soon as the doors were closed, Mr Reynolds began shouting at me, saying that I had told lies about talking to Mr Adams. He continued to scream at me for several hours, until it was time to go in front of the TV cameras to announce our joint communiqué. Mr Reynolds suddenly put on a big smile and said that "we had had a very

successful and friendly discussion" although it would be premature to reveal what we had agreed. On the plane home I asked Mr Hurd what we actually had agreed. He said that we had agreed to have another meeting. I was so pleased that we had made such good progress with our Irish peace plan that I celebrated by asking the air hostess for an extra bag of peanuts but I had not found out how to open them before the plane landed.

Thursday

In my judgement, it would be in no way fitting for someone in my position to gloat at the sight of Mrs Thatcher being cross-examined for eight hours about the so-called "Super-Glue affair". She had only one answer for all the brilliant questions that she was asked, namely: "I was the Prime Minister, and therefore too important to know about what was going on." It was sad to see a once-powerful figure reduced to making up such flimsy excuses.

Mr Meyer brought in the newspapers, we all read bits of it out to each other in funny voices. Mr Clarke does a very good imitation of Mrs Thatcher and we all had a good laugh, except for Mr Portfolio, who went all po-faced and said it wasn't a laughing matter. Mr Waldegrave then brought in a letter with the tea, and when I opened it, I found it was a message from Mr Justice Scott ordering me to come along to give evidence to his enquiry. What a nerve, I thought. But, quick as a flash, I thought of what I will say to all the clever lawyers — i.e. "I was Foreign Secretary, and therefore too important to know what was going on."

Friday

Let there be no doubt — Mrs Bottomley is a very clever woman. This morning she explained to the Cabinet her latest brilliant plan for saving money on the Health Service. She has decided to close down to more of the hospitals she said she would keep open, including one called Bart's.

"How can you do that?" asked Mr Gummer, rather wetly in my judgement. "It is 800 years old."

"All the more reason why we have to close it," Mrs Bottomley snapped at him.

Everyone was a bit quiet after this, but then Mr Gummer rather unwisely persisted. "Isn't it still going to be rather unpopular?" he asked.

"No, of course not," she said. "I am going to make the announcement about it being closed on Christmas Eve, when everyone will be far too busy celebrating to take any notice."

"In that case," called out Mr Heseltine, who was doing his press-ups in the corner as usual, "I shall announce on Christmas that I am the new prime minister."

"You can't do that," Mr Clarke chipped in, "I've already planned to do that myself on Boxing Day."

There is certainly a seasonal mood here in Downing Street! Someone has even added to my list of Christmas presents "No. 7. A new job."

Saturday

I am still working on my list of things to go into my "Back to Basics" book. Family life is certainly one of them. Oh yes!

"Then why are you supporting Prince Charles?" asked my wife Norman whilst we were reading Hello! magazine at breakfast. "He has not set much of an example with Camilla, has he?"

I was not inconsiderably annoyed by this. "You do not understand at all," I said. "He is the Heir to the Throne. Besides, he may well have been under pressure from a nagging wife. I do not think we are in a position to pass moral judgements."

"That doesn't stop you going on about single mothers, does it?" she said.

When she is in a mood like this there is no point in trying to argue in a rational manner, so I left for the office (downstairs).

Sunday

There is a report in the paper saying that my ex-friend Norma Lamont was given a cheque for £8,000 for being sacked. Let there be no doubt that I was furious when I heard this. I demanded an explanation from my adviser Miss Hogg. She merely said: "Yours will be much bigger when you go."

SPACE NEWS

RESCUE MISSION 100% SUCCESSFUL

by Old Mother Hubble

THE WORLD held its breath last night as astronauts performed one of the most daring repair missions in the history of space exploration.

They completed a five-hour space walk, 3,000 miles above the earth's surface, to reposition an orbiting satellite that has been floating helplessly in deep space ever since its launch.

Known as the Cow, due to its being a cow, the cow immediately ran into trouble following its initial "jump". It failed to achieve a geostationary position over the moon and subsequently drifted aimlessly, failing to add anything to our knowledge of quasars, pulsars, solar storms or the origin of the universe.

Hey Diddle Diddled

Said a jubilant Houston spokesman: "At a cost of less than $300 million billion we've realigned the Cow so that it sustains its lunar orbit. First reports back suggest that the Cow is now transmitting back the kind of incomprehensible information space scientists seem to want 'Moo, Moo,' and that sort of thing."

As the news of the success of Operation CashCow spread through NASA there were scenes of rejoicing. A cat provided makeshift music on a violin, a little dog was spotted laughing to see such fun and an over-excited dish ran away with the idea that the Hubble telescope is terrific value for money.

LATE NEWS

Space Mission Huge Success

Newspaper editors last night successfully filled up huge amounts of space with pictures of astronauts, long detailed pieces by underused science correspondents, and very very big graphics. *(Reuters)*

"Couldn't we just video Christmas and watch it some other time?"

THE REAL STORY BEHIND DIANA'S WORLD-SHATTERING ANNOUNCEMENT

EXCLUSIVELY REVEALED TO PRIVATE EYE

by Our Royal Experts Anthony Holdonihaventaclue, Andrew Mortonsofthisstuffavailable, Ingrid Sewage, Dross Benson, Nigel Demoldstoriesagain, Peter McItup, James Whiterson, and everyone else

PRIVATE EYE can now tell the world for the first time the truth behind the sensational news that Princess Diana is to give up some of her charity engagements and to limit her public appearances to whenever she feels like it.

The real story is entirely different from the one the public is being led to believe. It is so sensational it may well threaten both the monarchy and the very existence of Britain itself.

These are the facts that will rock the constitution to its foundations.

- **Charles and Diana, according to top Palace sources, are NOT still happily married but are in fact separated.**
- **Furthermore, close friends claim that the Royal couple don't really get on very well.**
- **And most amazing of all...**
- **Er...**
- **That's it.**

"There's no crown in mine"

Notes & Queries

QUESTION: What are the origins of the word 'Xmas'?

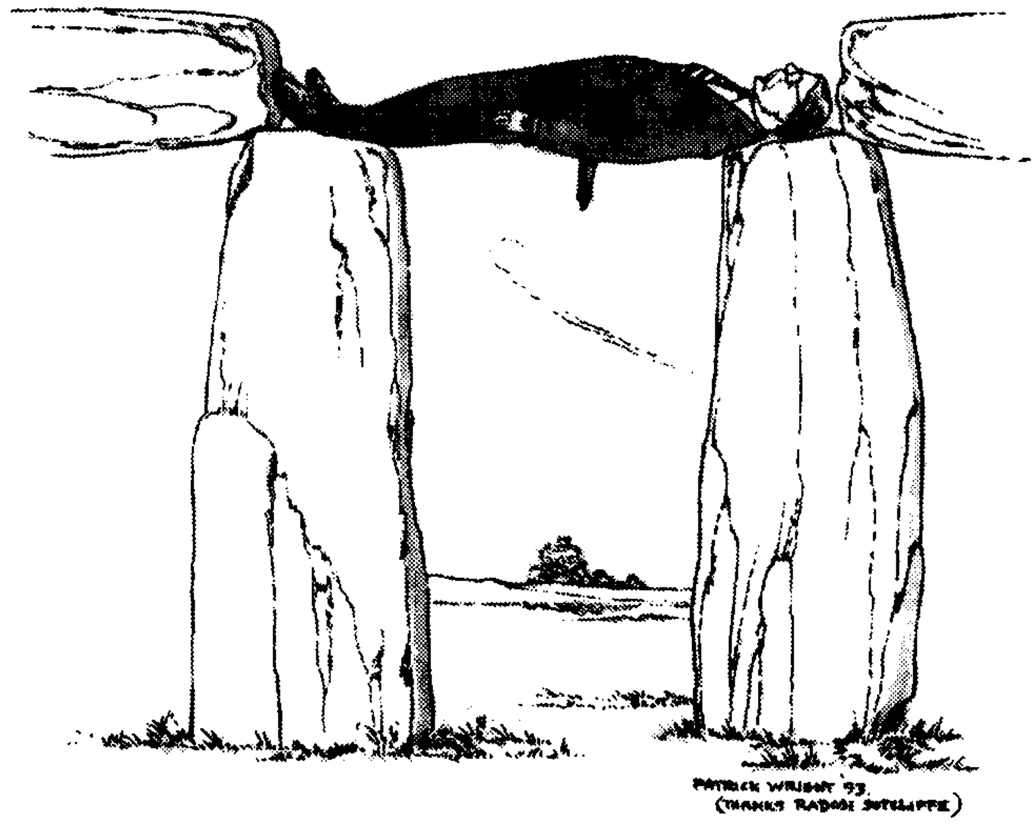
☐ 'Xmas' is a corruption of the Old English place-name 'Exmutha' — a small settlement in Devon traditionally associated with the Winter Solstice. The villagers go round at the end of December wishing each other 'a happy Exmuth'. (See *Old Devon Customs* by Candida Lycett-Green.) — *P.B. Wimbush, Penge.*

QUESTION: Who were the Three Wise Men?

☐ Dead Sea Scroll scholars are now in broad agreement that the 'three kings' referred to in the Bible were almost certainly women from ancient matriarchal tribal groupings scattered along the shores of the Black Sea. It is very unlikely that they ever went to Bethlehem, since they would doubtless have preferred to visit one of the proto-feminist communities at Qu'mran which at the time was experimenting with new forms of social organisation based on the exclusion of men. — *A.N. Wilson, author of 'The Unread Jesus'.*

101 USES FOR A JOHN MAJOR (27)

IMPORTANT PART OF ANCIENT MONUMENT



NATION WEEPS AS BEST-LOVED COUPLE CONFIRM SPLIT IS FINAL

by Our History Today Staff **E.P. "Harry" Thompson**

THE shock announcement by the Prince and Princess of Smiles that their partnership is over sent the whole country into mourning. Rumours of a rift between the two had been circulating for a while but the situation has now clearly deteriorated beyond repair.

It is clearly all over for Newman and Baddiel who have both said that they now wish to retire from comedy. David and Rob are both to have access to the joke and will appear together in public for important occasions, such as those when they might make a lot of money.

"It is no laughing matter," said sources close to the couple. "For some time they have been competing for the limelight and the tension was unbearable. Now they've both got to find a new role. Maybe something like Robbie Coltrane in *Cracker* or Hugh Laurie in that other thing."

Weeping fans were inconsolable. "We've followed them ever since that magical day in the '80s when they got hitched together and wrote a topical one-liner for Radio 4's *Week Ending*." *(That's enough — Ed.)*

"Good evening, squire — plenty of room inside!"

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sunday Opening

From Sir Herbert Gussett

SIR—I am sure I am not alone in sensing that everything which has made our British way of life the envy of the world is in imminent danger of crumbling into ruins.

The last straw is surely the introduction of compulsory Sunday shopping. Soon gone forever, it seems, will be that age-old ritual which for centuries has set the English Sunday apart as a hallowed moment in the week unlike any other, a time when we can withdraw from the hubbub of normal daily life to take quiet stock of the things which really matter. Here in this remote part of the West Country, I and my neighbours have been used since time immemorial to gather every Sunday morning from far and wide, to congregate in a spirit of reverence and communion in that one place at the centre of our village where we can all feel equal. Just before 11 o'clock, we file in to our appointed seats, waiting in hushed anticipation for that moment when a bell rings and we hear a familiar, much-loved, voice intoning: "We're open, gentlemen, what'll it be?"

It is a sad day indeed when an Englishman will be forced to give up everything he holds most dear, just because his wife (whose name escapes me) wants him to spend his Sunday mornings driving her over to the Safeway in Midsomer Norton.

Is nothing, I must ask, sacred?

Yours sincerely
SIR H. GUSSETT
"Goneshoppin' "
Asda-under-Lyne
Wilts

ROYAL ALBERT HALL

HEAVYWEIGHT WRESTLING CONTEST

OVER 12 ROUNDS

INTRODUCING

NICK "BUNTER" SOAMES

a Royal Champion if ever there was one. Watch 22-stone Bunter eat his opponent alive, along with 2 tonnes of 18-year-old Common Market beef.

VERSUS

GEORGE "THE FAT BOY" AUSTIN

the Venerable Viper from York, who wants to knock out the next King of England.

Jointly sponsored by the *Daily Hellograph* and Carey and Sharey Promotions plc

Yes! Everyone loves Mr Lobby!

by Our Showbiz Staff **NOEL BEARDY**

YES! Lobbymania is sweeping the country as the fat, pink man with the silly face wins the nation's heart!

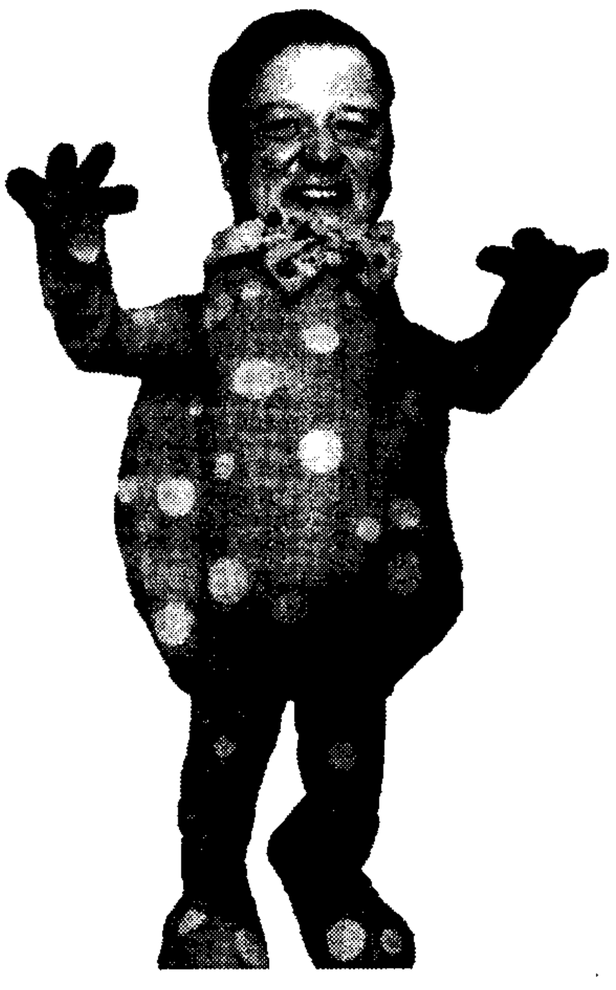
Mr Lobby, the star of John Major's House of Commons Party, has become the surprise hit of this year's TV season.

The roly-poly figure of fun has won universal praise for his no-nonsense lobbying to everyone in sight and is so successful that he is outshining his creator, the bland frontman Mr John Major.

Crinkly Bottom of the Polls

Lobby's unlikely theme song "Tax the Middle Classes" is a Christmas sensation and Mr Lobby will probably be in the Number One slot by Christmas.

"No I won't," he said. "I'll be in Number 10."

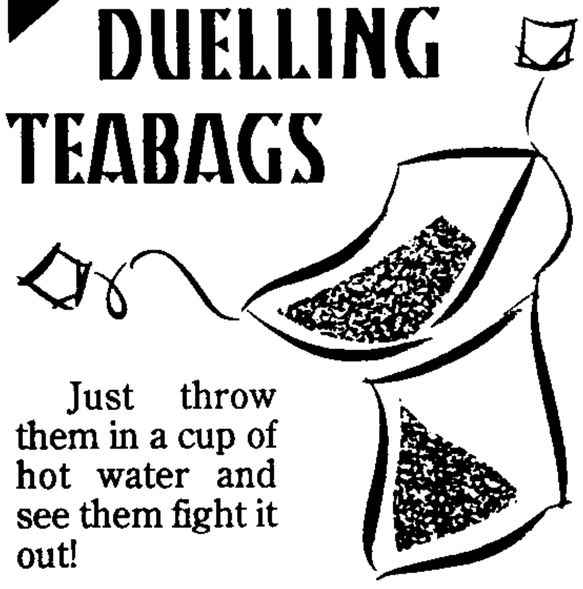


GNOME'S XMA

For the First Time in the UK

Orient Lovers!

ANCIENT CHINESE DUELLING TEABAGS

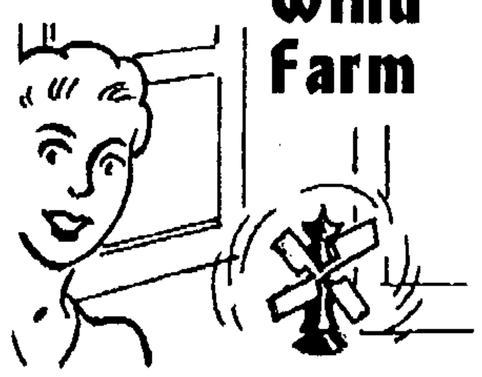


Just throw them in a cup of hot water and see them fight it out!

Packet of 12: £2.99

Harness those household draughts with your own

Bonsai Wind Farm



Thanks to this miracle of Malaysian micro-technology, you can heat and light your house simply by installing these mini-windmill generators wherever there is a draught.

£22,798.99

Complies with EC Regulations

Plays theme tune from Labour Party's Sheffield Rally

WARNING: the Bonsai Wind Farm operates only when the wind is above 60 knots.

Pet Lovers

It's in your shops now!

THE GER-BROLL

DOES your gerbil look out the window when it's raining and say: "Why can't I go out and play in the garden?" Well, now he can, thanks to this breakthrough in weatherproofing petnology from Kuwait.

Just strap on Ger-Broll, open it up, and Gerbie stays nice 'n' dry!!

Patterns: John, Chris and General.

Price £7.75

Plays Beethoven-style theme music from Midland Bank's TV advert.

THE LUCKY STONE OF LEVITT

FOR thousands of years the tribesmen of the Fraudi Arabian desert have put their trust in a tiny stone no bigger than a thumbnail. When called before the tribal chief in some legal dispute, the tribesmen who held the lucky stone would get off scot-free. Now you too can benefit from the mysterious good fortune bestowed by the Levitt Stone. **Price: £34 million (exc. VAT)**

Bid Farewell To Checkout Misery with

BAG-O-SESAME

the Revolutionary Bag-Opening Device from the Yemen.

The Bag-o-Sesame fits snugly into your car boot, ready for use in any large supermarket. Simply insert the plastic bag into the machine and, hey presto, within minutes the bag is open 'n' ready for use! Plays theme from *Casualty*.

ONLY £259.99

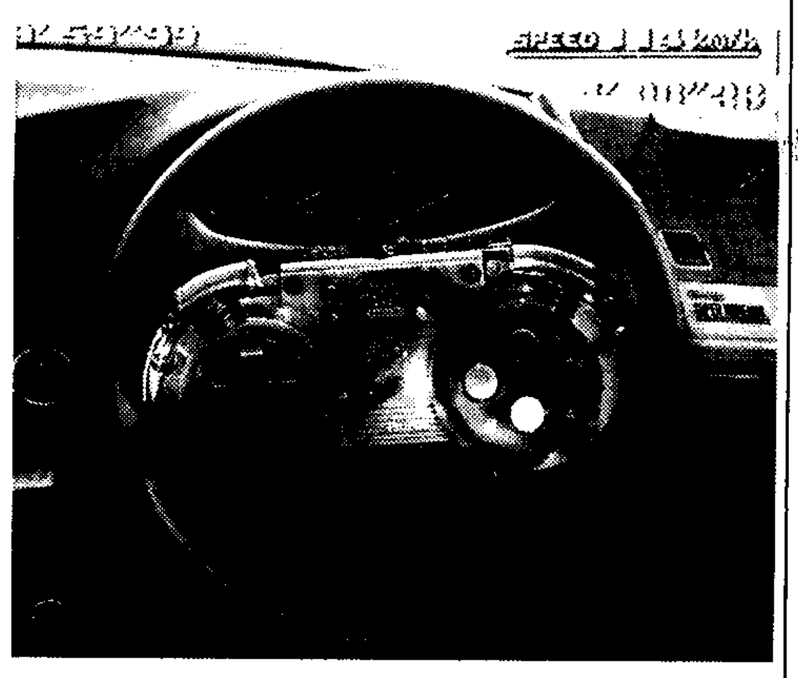
THE SUPER M25 GAMEBOY

MOTORISTS!

The first-ever video game built into your steering wheel!

Play as you drive! All the thrills of your favourite domestic game experience but NOW in your car!

Runs off car battery and can be installed onto steering column of all makes of vehicle.



Games include: ★ *M25 Tailback* ★ *No Services on M4* ★ *Fog on M11* ★ *10-mile Contraflow on M6 Southbound*

Price: £999.95

GOT A HANGOVER?

SAY GOODBYE TO PLINK! PLINK! FIZZ! MISERY WITH

MUTE-A-SELTZER

THE last thing you need on the morning after is to listen to your tablets hitting the glass and then noisily dissolving. Now, thanks to this ingenious device, you can sit in blissful silence while you wait for your favourite dose of bicarbonate of soda!

Place 'Mute-a-Seltzer' over any glass and — bingo! — Seltzer's as quiet as a mouse!

Special Introductory Offer: £3.75 (+p&p)

PLAYS TCHAIKOVSKY'S 1812 OVERTURE

New from Tanzania!

HOME SAFETY!

Say Goodbye to Hot Lightbulb Misery with the revolutionary

HOLD-EE-BULB

At last changing a lightbulb does not mean burning your fingers. Just slip on the **'Hold-ee-Bulb'** and the thermally insulated padding keeps your fingers nice 'n' safe!! Made from 100% asbestos.

Fits any size hand.

Choice of colours: Black.

Says TV's Esther Rantzen: *"No home should be without a Hold-ee-Bulb. Parents without a supply of Hold-ee-Bulbs in the home should be liable to prosecution and possible imprisonment."* ***3p per pair.***

GIVE YOUR FRIENDS THE SHOCK OF THEIR LIVES WITH THE

LYNNE BARBER HORROR MASK

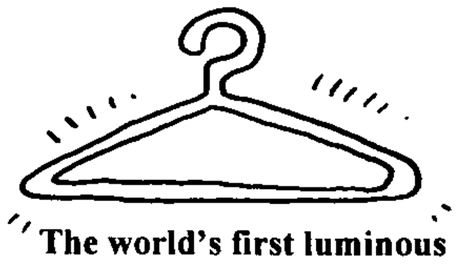
WATCH them run screaming out of the room as you don this true-to-life feature-hugging replica of Fleet Street's First Lady!

● Guaranteed to terrify all the family! ● Made in a Pacific Rim country. ● Only 2p.

EARLY RISERS!

Don't upset your partner by turning on the light in the wee small hours. Trust:

LUM-O-HANG



The world's first luminous coathanger. New from Norway, the *Lum-O-Hang* allows you to choose your day's clothes from the wardrobe with no external light needed!

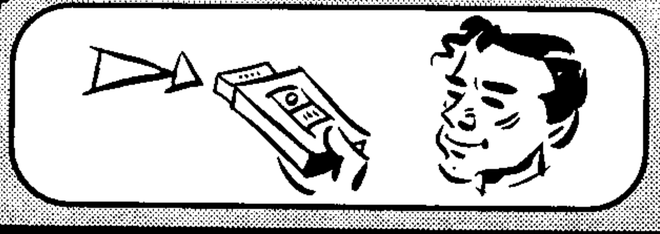
Colours: Cilla Black, Michael White, Halib Orange.

Price: 25p pack of six

Save £££'s on those overdue videos with the Gnome

Vide-O-Bleep

No more "giving £2 to Mr Patel" misery because your vid's overdue! Just attach the device to your video, key in the date, and 24 hours later the "bleep" goes off — followed by a robotic voice which tells you "It's time to take me back, mister".



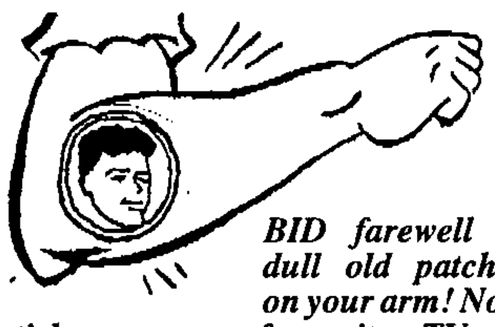
Choice of voices: Jonathan Ross, Stephen Fry, Victor Meldrew. Price 37p.

XMAS MAILMART

Giving up Smoking?

Try the Novelty Nicotine Patch that everyone's talking about!

CELEBROPATCH



BID farewell to dull old patches on your arm! Now stick on your favourite TV or sporting personalities to help you kick the habit.

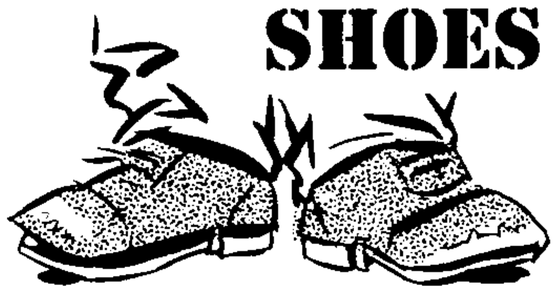
Choose from the following Favourite Faces:

● *Gazza* ● *Paul Merton* ● *Kiri Te Kanawa* ● *Desmond Lynam* ● *P.D. James* ● *Trevor Macdonald.*

Packet of 100: 50p

CHRISTMAS NOVELTY!

CLARKE'S SHOES



INCREDIBLY amusing topical Christmas gift! A pair of old suede Hush-Puppy coverettes which will make your best shoes look like something from Oxfam!!

When friends see your feet they'll think you are the Chancellor of the Exchequer! Hours of fun!

Fits all shoe sizes (8)

Price: £2.99 each

Mobile phone-lovers! Don't be embarrassed when phoning the office from the street. Now no one need know, when you use

CELL-U-GLOVE

It looks just like an ordinary leather glove — but thanks to the ingenuity of Sri Lankan scientists it is actually your portable phone! Operates on all Cellnet, Racal and Rabbit networks. People will just think you're coughing politely — but really you're making megabucks on the world's stock markets.

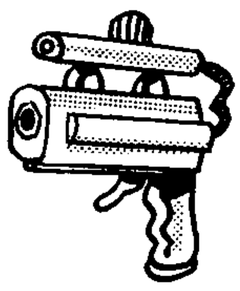
Monthly rental only

£2,416.99p (plus VAT)

An end to Minicab Radio Misery with this personalised Jamming Device.

SIL-O-CAB

No more crackling "Roger – Roger – P.O.B. – Wilco –" misery as your late night driver tries to find out where you live. Just one laser-directed blast at his 2-way radio and hey presto! it's out of action for days!!



Price: £375.79.

(Comes with own leather holster.)

Plays theme tune from Classic FM.

Sub-Aqua Computer Buffs!

AQUAMATIC 2000

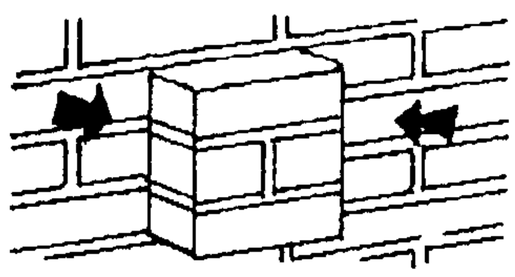
The World's First Underwater Mouse Mat. No self-respecting Aqua-Hacker can afford to miss this latest breakthrough in submarine computer technology, as developed for the Israeli Ministry of Defence. Compatible with all systems, including Palin, Cleez, Bimbo, Taki, Kenco and Steyn Mk II.

Choice of colours: Blue. Plays "March of the Penguins" theme from David Attenborough's TV hit *In The Freezer.*

Price: £2,187.99

Say goodbye to unsightly burglar alarms with

ALARM-O-GONE



Made in Peru, this decorative cover fits snugly over your external burglar alarm, so no one can see it.

Choose from these fabulous camouflage designs: Tudor Brick, Half-Timbered, Executive Pebble Dash.

Approved by Council for Protection of Rural England.

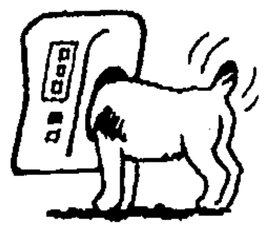
Plays theme tune from TV's Crimewatch.

£84.99

Too Tired to Walk the Dog?

Now it's

CANINE REALITY



from Sweden *(the home of Computer-Generated Animal Technology)*

SPECIALLY designed for senior citizens, busy businessmen or anyone who can no longer fit Fido's walk into a busy schedule, **"Canine Reality"** allows you and man's best friend to have all the pleasure and none of the pain! (Forget those frosty mornings, dark evenings, rainy afternoons!!) All you have to do is pop your pooch's head into the helmet and — **hey presto! — it's walkies!!**

Choice of walks include: ■ Round the Block ■ Round the Park ■ Round the Block and Park.

Easy to operate. One size fits all dogs

£335,307 ***(helmet extra)***

Plays theme tune from "To Play The King"

Trouser Press Connoisseurs! Now, for the first time in England, the amazing Albanian

SOLAR TROUSER PRESS

FOR centuries the Albanians have led the world in Trouser Press Expertise, and now they have added an ecologically friendly dimension to their range of specialist products.

All you have to do is place your trousers in the press at night and — abracadabra! — the next morning they are perfectly creased and ready to wear!

WARNING

The Solar Trouser Press may not work effectively during the hours of darkness. For best results, it is advisable to press trousers during strong sunlight.

Price: £37,742.19

Plays theme tune from "Cracker"

Christmas Camcorder Enthusiasts!

Banish Cold Eyepiece Blues with

OPT-O-THERM

●When Dad goes out to film the toddlers in the snow he doesn't want to get his eye all cold, does he? Now at last, thanks to advances by Cypriot scientists at the Sony Institute at Akrotiri, Dad can look into his lens in perfect comfort on even the chilliest of Christmas mornings!

● Just slip Opt-O-Therm over eyepiece and — hey presto! — miniature insulating circuit activates and keeps Dad's eye warm as toast!!

Packet of 3 — £11.95

NEW FROM THE US

— the first-ever anatomically *and* politically correct doll!

MARIETTA

All you have to do is touch the doll, and it immediately accuses you of child abuse — loud enough for you neighbours to hear and call in the social workers.

"An invaluable learning aid for any under-5 awareness programme"
Melanie Phillips, *The Observer.*

£373,000.99p

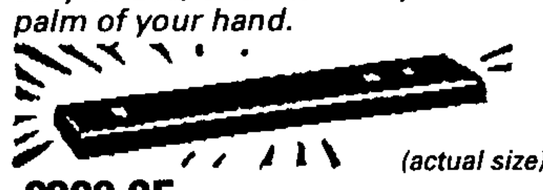
TV LOVERS!

Say Goodbye to Honey-I've-Lost-The-Remote-Control Misery with

The Seek-and-Find BX37

When you realise your remote control has gone missing you simply activate the Seek-and-Find BX37 and it will locate your missing handset within a minimum of 24 hours.

The BX37 is compact, easy-to-use, and fits neatly into the palm of your hand.



(actual size)

£299.95 *(batteries not included)*

Plays theme from Radio 4's "The Moral Maze".

IMPORTANT
The BX37 comes complete with its own compact Seek-and-Finder, the BX-38 *(not shown).*

THE SCOTT INQUIRY

WOMAN IN THE EYE

MS ELVIRA PRESLEYDALE

WHAT is she like – the brilliant, razor-tongued, Cambridge - educated, gorgeous, pouting Portia who is the talk of London for the way she tore Lady Thatcher to shreds and left the Iron Lady in a state of total meltdown?

Hardened reporters gasped in admiration as she fearlessly asked the former prime minister to "look at Bundle B, page 349, paragraph 3".

A fumbling Lady Thatcher stammered: "I'll just put on my glasses."

"By all means," sneered the relentless Ms Emmerdale, to Lady Thatcher's obvious embarrassment.

Time and time again the one-time Supreme Ruler of the Universe quailed before the howitzer-like interrogation of Wensleydale.

When Lady Thatcher replied to one question "Could you ask me that again? I didn't quite catch what you said", the remorseless Ms Paxmandale immediately snapped back: "In that case, Lady Thatcher, I will repeat the question."

The Lady who was once not for turning quickly turned bright red, and murmured: "Thank you very much."

Make no mistake. Ms Priscilla Terminator 3 will soon be making waves as Britain's first Lady Chancellor.

The Alternative Rocky Horror Coronation Service

The Archbishop of Canterbury: Hullo, everyone, from this historic Abbey of Westminster.

(Coronation March "Vivat Reggae!" played by the Princes Trust Steel Band)

Royal Procession

(His Majesty The King and Partner will process up the aisle, accompanied by selected Royal biographers and journalists. The boys of Westminster School Choir shall then shout "It really is appalling.")

The Hereditary Lord High Butler of All England (Sir D. Frost): Hullo, good evening and welcome to this very historic service.

Archbishop: We'll take a pause here and, after the break, we'll be back with the Anointing, the Solemn Vows and much much more. So don't go away, now...

(There shall now follow a commercial break, which may feature Sir Stephen Fry, Lady Joanna, Countess of Lumley, or Sir William Rushton O.M.)

Archbishop: Welcome back. And now, on with the Vows. Do you Charles George Frederick Albert solemnly swear to uphold the doctrines of the Church of England, whatsoever they may be at the time of going to press?

King: Er, yes. I do so agree.

Archbishop: Do you further swear to solemnly uphold the European Union, its rights and traditions, its Parliament, its Councils and its Ministers, so help you God.

King: Oh yes, I'm all for that.

Archbishop: Do you finally renounce Camilla Parker Bowles and all her works?

King: No, I'm afraid I can't possibly go along with that one.

Partner: Quite right, too.

Archbishop: OK, let's throw this one over to the congregation to see what they think.

Deaconess Cilla Black *(for it is she):* Ta very much, Bish. Now then. Hands up all those who want Chuck to be King!

Congregation: Long live Chazza!

(Kingometer on High Altar lights up, showing broad consensus in favour of Charles as Monarch)

Rev Cilla: Oooh, he's gonna make a lovely monarch! Go on, Chuck, girrus a kiss.

(The King shall them embrace his partner. There shall then follow a short ecumenical address from His Eminence the Rabbi of Blue)

Bluejoke: Hallo Brian, hallo Sue, hallo Charles, hallo Camilla. You know, it's a funny thing. But my old granny used to say to me: "Being a King is not just a job for a day. It's a job for life." Now, let's sing a song and we'll all feel happier.

(The choir shall then sing the anthem "Zadoka — The Woman Priest" by Andrew Lloyd Webber [arr. G.F. Handel]. There shall follow a reading from Prince Charles's speech on the Book of Common Prayer, presented by the Lord Branagh and Dame Emma Thompson)

Readers: "I think, actually, it's very important to preserve the beauties of our language, like that wonderful passage from Shakespeare's liturgy about 'to have and to hold through thick and thin, till death do us part'."

King: Oh dear — could we do that bit again, leaving out the 'have and to hold' thingie.

Partner: Good decision, Charles.

Director (HRH Prince Edward Windsor from Ardent TV, in co-operation with NZTV and the Houston Cable Network): Alright everyone, we'll go straightaway, from the top...

Archbishop: Hullo, everyone, from this historic...

Edward: No, no, not you love — you were great. Just Ken and Emm.

(The coverage of the Coronation shall then be interrupted by a historic newsflash that Lady Diana Spencer has announced her retirement from public life [again])

"Hi, money, I'm home!"

A SYLVIE KRIN SPECIAL

HOME ALONE

THE STORY SO FAR: Diana has announced that she is to turn her back on public life.

Now read on...

CHARLES looked out of the leaded window at the wintry landscape, the weak sunshine lighting up the naked skeletons of the Robert Elms, the Harry Limes and the pale slender Jane Ashes (*Get on with it — Ed*).

Charles reflected on the day's events as he sipped a glass of mulled Burberry yoghurt made on his own organic farm and now available at Aldington's superstores all over the country.

Yes, it was the end of an era. He had won and Diana had lost. It should have been a moment to savour his triumph but as he watched a small white-breasted vole scamper across the frosty sward in search of an acorn, he could not help but feel a tinge of pity, nay, compassion, for the tearful figure of his wife. There she had stood next to Lord Archole, her trusty adviser, the words choking in her perfectly formed throat:

"I want to be alone."

Yes! She had included all the heart-rending phrases in her short speech and had left the nation weeping. Even Lord Archole himself had scarce been able to restrain the tears, dabbing his eye with a fragrant handkerchief purchased only that morning at Presley and Baxendale's in Shepherd's Market.

At least Diana had quit the stage with dignity. What was it Shakespeare had said? "Our play is ended now and the actors are all crawling off to school." Or was that the other one? The one he had been in at Gordonstoun when his housemaster Dr Goebbels had praised his performance as the Second Duke in *Much Labour's Lost* or was it *The Three Gentlemen of Venice*? It was so important to learn Shakespeare in schools. He would make another speech on the subject soon, and now at last he could do so with the spotlight firmly on him and him alone. There would be no more so-called soap-opera, no more distracting publicity about Diana this, Diana that. No, he was free at last, just like the small vole that even as he spoke was being devoured by the Head Gardener's Paxman terrier...

THE clock on the tower of St Camilla-in-the-Wardrobe struck midday as Charles waited with increasing irritation on the steps of the Centre for the Homeless opposite the old church.

"I can't understand it, sire," said a small man with glasses and a beard. Chris Corduroy, the director of the Prince's Dockland Homeless Trust, apologised nervously. "We put a notice up on the board saying you'd be here. We normally get a lot of people in the Day Centre at lunchtime. They get free soup and there's a colour TV in the snooker room upstairs."

Charles felt his irritation increase. "Surely there must be some press?" he asked. The fact that no one was there really was... appalling. Here was one, giving up one's time and there was no one to meet one.

At that point a solitary figure with a camera moved forward from behind the metal barriers which had been put there to hold back the expected crowd. His black face beamed as he puffed on a home-rolled cheroot which seemed to Charles to have an exotic aroma.

"Respect! Yo!" the man shouted as he slapped Charles's hand and asked him to "be bad". What on earth was he talking about? Respect? Yes indeed, there was so little of it about these days. Perhaps he could work it into his speech. The photographer, who said he came from the magazine *Ganja and Ganjamen*, then departed, leaving Charles and Chris Corduroy alone once again.

"Perhaps you would like to see round the Centre, sire, whilst we wait for the homeless to arrive. We've made a number of improvements since you were last here. For example, there's a bottle bank at the back..."

Corduroy led the way upstairs and Charles was relieved to hear the sound of a large group of men laughing and cheering. Thank goodness! This must be where all the homeless were — waiting for his speech in the warm and drinking some nourishing soup. One could not really blame them for not wanting to come out in the freezing cold when he arrived.

"This way, sire." His host pushed open the swing door bearing the legend "Bring Back the GLC" and Charles was greeted by the sight of 100 poorly dressed men enthusiastically watching a large PoliToinbi stereo television, a gift from the Worshipful Company of Embezzlers.

Charles wondered what on earth on the television could be so riveting?

That bearded figure next to the aeroplane looked familiar. Why, it was that Branson chappie with the gramophone business. And next to him, that beautiful woman dressed in red, smiling and waving at the cameras...?

Great powers! It was... It was...

"Di! Di! We want Di!" shouted the men raucously, banging their spoons on their metal soup plates.

"Di! Di! Long live Di!"

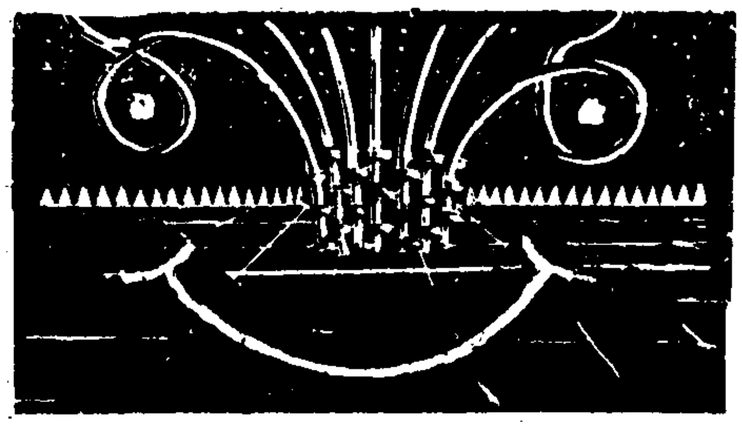
Outside the clock chimed the half, seeming to join in with the men's exultant chant.

"Ding! Ding! Di! Di! Di!"

Did it too echo the passing knoll of his kingly hopes?

(To be continued)

DIARY



THE FOOD AND DRINK GANG

Chris Bouffy: 'Tis — as the old adage has it! — the season to be merry — and, on a more serious note, what better way to kick off this festive diary with the very latest in food scares, fresh in today…

There is increasing concern being voiced throughout the entire food-producing community that the ongoing popularity of the traditional Christmas lunch has given rise to a dramatic increase in the death of the turkey population as a whole. In a survey, over 90% of householders questioned who were planning to eat a turkey on Christmas day admitted that their bird would be dead before it reached the table.

These revelations have already triggered widespread concern among the turkey population as a whole, and many leading experts are calling for a complete government crackdown on the outdated practice of eating dead turkeys. To help you serve a live turkey this Christmas, we have produced this BBC Food and Drink leaflet, "Best Served Still Clucking". It also shows you how you can have a great deal of fun trying to carve the bird while it runs around your kitchen — but please do be careful when you stuff it — live turkeys have been known to scratch and even bite. And here's our very own Jilly Silly to tell us what to have with it: Jilly — ?

Jilly Silly: Oz and I have had simply LOADS of fun choosing your Yuletide tipple this year. What do I want in my mouth this Christmas? I want something soft, I want something mouthfilling, I want something big and preferably red, I want something I can swirl around my tongue, suck and spit out, I want something huge and simply splendid, something I can really chew on.

Oz Cluck: But to go back to the booze — why not try something that little bit different with your meal this year? For instance, I've tried following the marvellous old Indian tradition, made famous by Gandhi —

Jilly Silly: No relation of Goosey Goosey, ha ha!

Oz Cluck: Thanks, Jilly. I've followed this marvellous old Indian tradition of drinking one's own urine. Mmmmm! It smells of new mown hay, it smells of barley-sugar, it smells of last night's curry, it smells of chewing-gum found on the sole of one's right foot after a long walk in a shopping precinct, it smells of anchovy, it smells of kidneys, it smells of a forest vole squashed under the wheel of an oncoming vehicle. Mmmm! And its taste is everything one wants from a urine sample — there's cloves, there's a hint of chocolate, there's lemon, there's ivy, there's apple, there's dandelions, and above everything else there's that marvellous, musky taste one gets from the bottom of one's dustbin after the rain's got into last week's oven scrapings. Chris — ?

Chris Bouffy: Thanks, Oz. Over the past week, a number of viewers have run in complaining of a large, dark, hairy, oily object that sticks to the outside of frying pans and dribbles. Don't worry, this is just Michael Beardie, our resident chef. Beardie — ?

Michael Beardie: Thanks, Bouffy. Later on, I'll be showing you how you can get very, very fat by eating lots of food very quickly, but now a couple of thoughts on choosing a kitchen table — first, you should choose a table, and second, you should put it in your kitchen. But now how to get very, very fat. It's really very simple. You'll need:

5lbs butter
6lbs duck or goose fat
7lbs clotted cream
8lbs milk chocolate
9lbs doughnuts
10lbs fatty meat

And here's how:

Eat them all up in one go — though for added flavour, if you have the time you might like to try mixing them all together in a large container first. And here — for those watching their weight! — is the Healthy Option.

Exactly the same as above, but add one level teaspoon of fromage frais.

Happy eating!

Chris Bouffy: Sounds delicious. Thanks, Beardie. Amen to that. And now to the dramatic finding of this week's survey, which are already beginning to cause shockwaves of profound indifference throughout the entire British food industry. Senior government nutritionists have discovered that though a packet bought in your High Street supermarket might carry such slogans as "delicious", "tasty" or "full of goodness", these words do not — I repeat NOT — refer to the packet itself, but to the food inside it.

Yet a number of ordinary shoppers continue to be gravely misled. 54-year-old Miss Doreen Daft collapsed on Friday having just eaten a packet marked "Delicious Curry for Two".

"Obviously, I threw away the food inside and tucked into the packet," she said yesterday, "and I am still recovering. I think it's an absolute disgrace that manufacturers can mislead the consumer in this way." And last night, a 63-year-old man, Mr Charles Cretin, was on a life-support machine having eaten a tin of baked beans marked "Mmmm so tasty", after first throwing away the beans inside.

How many more lives will be put at risk before manufacturers clearly mark their packets "DO NOT EAT". This is an issue which must concern us all. Jilly — ?

Jilly Silly: Mmmmm! This is a real joyful festive absolutely super sparkling lovely happy-making humdinger bouncing bean of a very average table wine! In this wine, there's cinnamon, there's breakfast cereal, probably Special K, there's motor oil, maybe Castrol GTX, there's Grip-Fix, there's a jam doughnut, there's a hint of after-shave, there's a couple of paperback books, there's someone else's lipstick, there's shepherd's pie, there's squid, there's fly spray, there's a couple of glasses of Lucozade, there's a pork sausage and there's a sea anemone. The only trouble is, they've left out the wine. Beardie — ?

Michael Beardie: I'm transfixed by your really super dress, Jilly! On a lighter note, a lot of you have written in to ask me for a handy tip on how to dispose of unwanted leftovers during the festive season. A Mr Yentob from West London writes in to suggest — why not truss them up and place them behind a magimix on their very own BBC2 Christmas show? Great idea, Alan! Chris — ?

Chris Bouffy: On a more serious note, a recent survey suggests that the number of food scares now being issued by the BBC is in danger of rising to unmanageable proportions, threatening the well-being and sanity of every man, woman and child in the country. And do please try to remember not to drink too much deadly poison over the festive season — in some isolated instances it has been known to kill. Happy worrying!

101 USES FOR A JOHN MAJOR (28)

A YULE LOG

Literary Review

You scratch my book...

YOU FELT you'd read many of this year's book of the year choices before? Well, you had, you had.

An astonishing number of reviewers chose their books of the year twice or thrice, showing conclusively what a small circuit the reviewers tread. Round and round, whoops, it's you again, *luvly* to see you.

Those who gave us the benefit of their advice more than once included Paul Johnson, Hilary Mantel, Jonathan Raban, Roy Foster, Robert Harris, Michael Palin, Michele Roberts, William Boyd, D.J. Taylor, Julie Burchill, Jilly Cooper, Gerald Kaufman, J.G. Ballard, Alastair Forbes, Hilary Mantel, Paul Johnson... Nice for them, but an incey-wincey bit claustro for the rest of us.

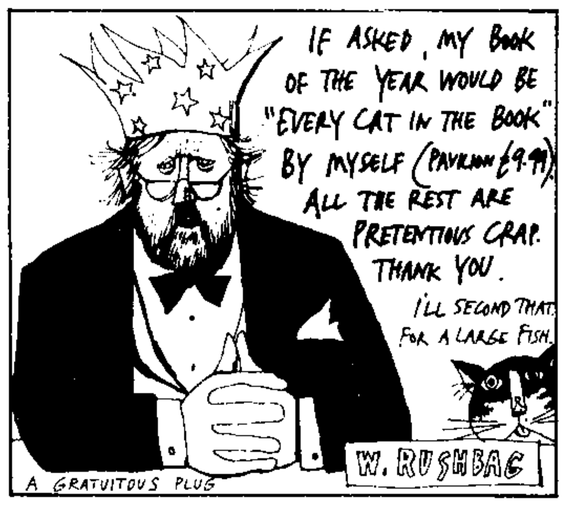
There are two techniques: one is somehow to try to find that you have chosen different books of the year, the other to brazen it out and short-change your readers.

Trying the second, Hilary Mantel worked hard. In the *TLS* she told us that Glyn Maxwell's poetry book *Out of the Rain* has "energy, wit and style". In the *Spectator*, she found it "supple, witty and ambitious". In the *Daily Telegraph*, she had been "enchanted, haunted and amused". Mantel's readers of course may well feel duped, done over and despised.

Michele Roberts was simply contemptuously lazy. In the *Sunday Times*, she offered this: "The novel I most enjoyed this year was *Aquamarine* by Carol Anshaw (Virago, £5.99), a tender and wry examination of the choices its heroine might have made. Three completely different versions are given of how her life might have turned out, linked by the image of the aquamarine water in the swimming-pool and the women athletes who meet in it. A new issue of a classic cookery book is Edouard de Pomiane's *Cooking with Pomiane* (Serif, £7.99): both serious and funny, never pompous, enjoyably anti-slimming. Giovanni di Paolo's ravishing illustrations of Dante's Paradiso are reproduced in an edition by John Pope-Hennessy (Thames & Hudson, £45), hideously expensive but pure delight."

By a strange coincidence, on the same day (28 November) she offered this to readers of the *Sunset Times*: "The novel I most enjoyed reading this year was *Aquamarine* by Carol Anshaw (Virago), a funny, tender and wry examination... Three completely different versions... linked by the image of the aquamarine water... classic cookery book... serious and funny, never pompous, and enjoyably anti-slimming... Dante's Paradiso... and so on, word for word. Truly, the word-processor is a labour-saving device.

Then we have the oldfashioned shameless plug. In the *Spectator*, Alice Thomas Ellis carelessly called it that, naming a book published by her husband, Colin Haycraft: "I make no apology for this shameless plug, any more than I would for our superb cheese pudding. *Le patron mange içi.*"


IF ASKED, MY BOOK OF THE YEAR WOULD BE "EVERY CAT IN THE BOOK" BY MYSELF (PAVILION £9.99) ALL THE REST ARE PRETENTIOUS CRAP. THANK YOU.
I'LL SECOND THAT. FOR A LARGE FISH.
W. RUSHBAG
A GRATUITOUS PLUG

In the *Daily Telegraph*, Nicholas Mosley was similarly upfront with his ad: "The book I have most admired this year is *The Green Book of Poetry* (Frontier, £14.95), compiled and with a bold running commentary by my son, Ivo Mosley... I can imagine no better Christmas present."

Slyer was Jeanette Winterson. Last year she made herself the first person other than her soulmate Barbara Cartland ever to choose her own book as the book of the year. This had the disadvantage that almost anybody who could read could see that he was being cheated. This year, much more subtly, she chose *The Penguin Book of Lesbian Short Stories* edited by Margaret Reynolds, saying "this focused and purposeful anthology will pleasure its readers". That way she didn't have to mention that Margaret Reynolds is the woman she lives with, nor that the climactic story in this collection is the only work published this year by Jeanette Winterson, which, as it happens, is all about her *grande affaire* with Margaret Reynolds. Move over, buggins, c'est moi, Jeanette!

Similarly underhand logrolling came from John Keegan (*Torygraph*), whose chose Hugh Thomas's *The Conquest of Mexico* "...because Hutchinson should be congratulated for publishing a work of high scholarship as a commercial venture. It deserves a great success." As, presumably, does Keegan's own *A History of Warfare* (a work of scholarship blah blah blah...) coincidentally published by... Hutchinson.

The *Torygraph*'s readers were also treated to Martin Cropper plugging his great friend Jonathan Meades's "swaggering *Pompey*" and Rose Tremain doing likewise for *May the Lord in His Mercy Be Kind to Belfast* by her East Anglian neighbour Tony Parker.

Meanwhile in the *Sunset Times*, Lucy Hughes-Hallett eulogised *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* by Roddy Doyle: "as remarkable for the subtlety of its prose as for the unsentimental clarity of its vision of childhood." By some mischance, Roddy Doyle neglected to mention his publisher, Dan Franklin of Secker & Warburg, in his list of thanks when he won the Booker Prize. Lucy H-H is Mrs Dan Franklin, so she's presumably repairing the damage. One of her other chosen books, *Trainspotting* by Irvine Welsh, was also published by her hubbie at Secker.

In the area of simple old-fashioned, straightforward, artisanal arse-licking — all cricked necks and furred tongues — there was little competition for Penny Perrick of the *Sunday Times*. Alone among reviewers she thought the book of the year was "*Highgrove: Portrait of an Estate* (Weidenfeld) by HRH The Prince of Wales and Charles Clover... the heir to the throne reveals where his talents really lie: in creating thyme walks, drainage systems, wildflower gardens and turning a fairly dismal country house into an earthly delight..." Well, the interest in drainage systems we knew about.

Sadly, this was the last year of Anthony Burgess's books of the year and it wasn't a classic performance. Happily, the profoundly pretentious position he has vacated has been confidently assumed by the libidinous ivory-plonker Alfred Brendel. In the *Sunday Telegraph*, he confidently selected only books not available in English: "Julio Cortazar's last collection of stories *Deshoras* (Unzeiten, Suhrkamp, 1990) laconic and masterful. Felisberto Hernandez's *Hortensias*, hallucinatory prose from an Uruguay (1902-1964)..." An Uruguyan. Olé. Or whatever the equivalent is in Latvian.

The book most chosen: Alan Clark's *Diaries*, named 17 times, by almost everybody on the *Sunday Telegraph* (at last somebody's had the guts to say how despicable and smelly women and the working classes are, arf arf) but by nobody at all at the *Observer*.

Next, surprisingly, came the thoroughly disappointing *Dr Johnson and Mr Hyde* by Richard Holmes (11 votes), trailed by *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony* by an Eyetie, Roberto Calasso, and Blake Morrison's weepie about his dad's death, *And When Did You Last See Your Father?* (10 each). Calasso must be good. Blake Morrison on the other hand, is the literary editor of the *Independent on Sunday*, which is thought not to have spoiled his chances among those who plan to publish a book themselves in the next year or two.

Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha got more than five mentions, as did Sebastian Faulkes' novel *Birdsong*, published by Hutchinson and praised by Faulkes' friend, and Hutchinson editor, Euan Cameron in the *Torygraph*. Others with more than *cinq points* were Andrew Motion's *Philip Larkin — A Writer's Life*, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy*, Carol Shields' *The Stone Diaries*, the *Flaubert-Sand Correspondence*, and Cormac McCarthy's Wild West novel, *All the Pretty Horses*.

Books & Bookmen

EYE readers claiming to be Hodder & Stoughton readers have been writing to Bookworm commending the worm for, in recent *Eyes*, supporting Hodder staff who are being made miserable by Tim Hely-Hutchinson (who, reveal insiders, is now known as the Penguin). And yet these authors are angry.

Hodder probably had, in the days of the Attenboroughs, a larger "middle list" than any other publisher; that is, bread-and-butter books which neither made nor lost much money. The new regime is particularly keen to smother such authors, and so they will be smothered. No other publisher will want them.

A.N. Author writes: "Perhaps the most distressing spectacle of the whole sorry business is the reluctance of Hodder's few remaining editors to stand by their authors in the face of the Headline shilling." Do they not understand that Hodder editors have always deferred to its management, whatever its colour?

Even great authors are going under. Geoffrey Moorhouse's backlist is being remaindered and put out of print along with that of most other Hodder authors. Authors such as Richard Holmes (*Dr Johnson and Mr Savage*) are not being encouraged to stay with the firm.

The Penguin's ruthless ambition, much admired in the City, is to remainder every Hodder book in the Dunton Green warehouse so that no book need be moved from there to the new Hodder Headline warehouse early next year. For as long as previous Hodder chairman Philip Attenborough, still on the board, is prepared to condone everything the new brutalist regime is doing, the Penguin can operate in comfort.

'Bookworm'

footnotes

MALICE IN SUNDERLAND

The trial of George Heron

IN OCTOBER last year a cheerful young man called Stephen Heron was found guilty of burglary and sent to Durham prison. Prisoners there believed he was *George* Heron, who had been arrested and charged with the awful murder in Sunderland of seven-year-old Nikki Allen.

Stephen Heron was beaten, abused and threatened until he could take no more. He killed himself. He was not related or connected in any way to George Heron.

Now, the lynch law that led to the death of Stephen Heron pursues George Heron — even after his acquittal of the child's murder last month.

The family of the little girl have sworn to find him and kill him. The Northumbria police have said nothing to deflect them. In a series of guarded and double-edged statements they have defended their investigation and hinted that they still believe Heron to be guilty.

What was the evidence against George Heron?

The man in the white shirt

First, identification. The little girl was stabbed remorselessly to death shortly before 10 o'clock on the night on 7 October 1992 in a derelict building in the Garths, a poverty-stricken area of Sunderland. Shortly before the murder, two witnesses saw a man walking towards the derelict building with the little girl skipping beside him. Margaret Hodgson said the man was clean-shaven and wearing a white shirt. He did not have spectacles. The other witness, Claire MacBeth, was with Mrs Hodgson.

Neither woman picked out Heron at an identity parade. This was hardly surprising, since Heron always wears spectacles and at the time had a moustache. Mrs Hodgson was surprised that every man on the identity parade was wearing spectacles. So certain was she that the man she saw was *not* wearing spectacles that she asked them all to take their glasses off.

At the start of the investigation, before they had a suspect, police regarded Margaret Hodgson as their star witness. She helped stage a reconstruction of the murder and was responsible for an artist's impression of the man she saw, whom the police plainly regarded as the murderer. (Scores of suspects were identified from the artist's impression: none of them George Heron). When Mrs Hodgson failed to pick Heron out, however, she was downgraded.

Instead, police and prosecution relied on identification evidence from three women: Jacqueline Newall, Jacqueline Simpson and Angela Owens. All three picked Heron out from an identity parade as a man they had seen in a pub near the murder scene on the evening of the murder.

This evidence conflicted with Heron's own statement to police that he could not remember going into the pub at all during the evening (though at one stage he said he might have gone there to buy some cigarettes). If he had gone to the pub, argued the prosecution, why had he not admitted it? Was he trying to cover up his movements because he was the murderer?

In his summing up, Mr Justice Mitchell asked the jury to look very carefully at the identification evidence inside the pub. To start with, one of the women said the man she saw was wearing denim. No evidence was produced that Heron ever wore denim. A member of his family said he never wore it.

Secondly, by the time of the identity parade almost everyone in the area knew that Heron had been arrested for the murder. Two of the three women knew Heron and what he looked like. The third lived on the same staircase. Jacqueline Newall and Jacqueline Simpson also told police they were certain that they had seen the man in the pub later in the evening — on a balcony. Police accepted that there had been a man on that balcony at the time the women saw him — but he was not George Heron.

Finally, of course, if Heron did go to the pub, that hardly made him a murderer.

Whose blood? Whose sweat?

The rest of the evidence was shockingly weak.

● Heron's shoes were torn apart by the police. Nothing was found on them. An "LMG" test was positive in three areas on the soles. This positive test can indicate blood — as well as many other substances, such as plant material or dog dirt. If it was blood on Heron's shoes, no one could tell if it was human, or, if it was human, if it was Nikki Allen's or Heron's. No blood was found on the carpet in the house Heron was living in (where he was alleged to have washed after the murder). Several LMG tests proved positive on other early suspects for the murder who were quickly ruled out.

● Blood was also said to have been found on a sweatshirt which the police first alleged was Heron's. This evidence was weakened when the sweatshirt turned out to belong to Heron's sister's boyfriend.

● A fragment of a footprint was found near the little girl's body. This was a print of a standard commando sole which corresponded with Heron's shoe — and that of Andrew Maven, who discovered the little girl's body, and that of the scenes-of-crimes police officer.

● A kitchen knife of a size and shape which could have been the murder weapon was found in Heron's sister's house where he was staying. A pathologist surmised that any member of the jury could have had such a knife in their home.

The rest of the evidence was based on the fact that Heron lived in the area where the murder was committed: so, almost certainly, did the murderer. Heron said initially that he did not know Nikki Allen. When he said that, the only picture of the little girl which had appeared in the newspapers showed her aged two, not seven. Later Heron agreed that the little girl could have played with his nephew.

Such was the prosecution case. Heron did not give evidence. His sister and others who lived in her house, where he was staying, said from the outset that he had been in the house all evening, baby-sitting. He had no previous convictions for violence or anything else.

After seven and a half hours' deliberation — the jury came back with a majority verdict of not guilty.

The lynch-law hullabaloo that followed — which included the bombing of Heron's solicitor's office — arose from the fact that Heron had confessed to the murder. This was true. He *had* confessed (as, incidentally, had another man, questioned a week earlier). But the confession was ruled inadmissible by the judge, Mr Justice Mitchell, on the ground that the questions which led up to it were oppressive and a "continuing injustice".

On the run: George Heron

The case of the 'soft' judge

Mr Justice Mitchell, is not the "soft" judge portrayed by some of the lynch law caricaturists. He was for most of his time at the bar a tough prosecutor. He was No 2 in the Crown team when the Birmingham Six case was referred to the court of appeal in 1987 and 1988. In that case he rigorously resisted the men's case that their confessions had been beaten or bullied out of them. The transcript of the police interviews of George Heron show that the judge had absolutely no alternative and took entirely the right decision.

Heron started by saying that he had nothing to do with the murder, and had been in his house all that evening. He "cracked" after hours of interrogation without his family being allowed access to him. He was represented during his "confession" by a legal executive from his solicitors — a former sergeant in the Sunderland police.

He was told by his interrogators that they knew he had done the murder, that he was a child molester and that others had confirmed his guilt (which they had not). The best test of his "confession" came after he cracked, when, as so often in these cases, the "confessor", weary and frightened, seeks to convince his interrogators that he did, after all, commit the crime.

Anyone who does commit such a crime can easily provide the neces-

sary evidence. Heron could not do so.

Nikki Allen was bricked into unconsciousness and stabbed 37 times in a small area of her heart. Told by the police that the little girl had been bricked, Heron confirmed: "I bricked her". Asked what he did next he said: "I punched her, I throttled her." (There was no evidence on Nikki's body of throttling). He was then asked if he had used "something else". He replied: "I used a metal pipe, I stuck it between her legs... There was blood everywhere."

"Blood?" came the question, "where from? Her head?"

Heron replied: "No. From between her legs."

There was no evidence of any attack between the legs or blood there, nor of any metal pipe.

He then said he had tried to have sex with the girl, but later, under heavy questioning inspired by the fact that there had been no sexual assault nor even any interference with Nikki's clothing, he retracted. Finally, he was asked again about his weapon. "Was it a knife, George?" asked a detective inspector. "Yes, it was a knife," replied Heron in some relief that he had at last scored a hit.

His "confession" had not mentioned a single fact about the murder that had not been widely publicised. Though he was questioned only a week and a half after the murder, and though the police knew countless facts and details about the murder which they had kept strictly to themselves, Heron could not help with any of them.

In this respect, his "confession" had a precedent. In December 1978, Pat Molloy told West Midlands police that he had been at Yew Tree Farm, Wordsley, when the newspaper boy Carl Bridgewater was murdered. Police promptly took Molloy to the farm. They were rather surprised when it became perfectly clear that Molloy (who was desperately keen to help them) had never been to the farm — or even seen it — in his life.

The plight of the Heron

Nevertheless, the prosecution proceeded to mount a trial on the basis of the Molloy confession. It is a small sign of progress in the criminal justice system that Mr Justice Mitchell threw George Heron's confession on the rubbish heap where it belonged. The lord chief justice, Lord Taylor, has since sprung to the judge's defence, asking, pertinently, if those who challenge him want to face up to another string of injustices in future years.

George Heron is on the run, homeless and poor, desperately trying to dodge his persecutors. The Northumbria police had better make sure that George Heron is safer than his innocent namesake, Stephen Heron. The best way to do that would be to discover who murdered Nikki Allen and bring him to justice. The prospects for such action look grim. The Northumbria police's main reaction so far has been to set up an inquiry — under a superintendent in the Northumbria police.

SUEDS CORNER 2

■ **ONE OF the most powerful lobbies ever mounted on government is bullying treasury and trade and industry ministers to change the law to remove the responsibility of accountancy firms for their blunders and negligence.**

As more and more accountants sue each other over the great business disasters of modern times (see *Sueds Corner, Eye* 833), a secret team comprising one member from each of the "big six" is demanding a "limited liability" law to enable accountants to avoid the creditors of bust businesses.

Their success is guaranteed by the number of accountants promoted by ministers to run the country, but the manner in which it is achieved may not get the necessary publicity. *Watch this space.*

Gold in them thar jails

HM PRISON SERVICE

In the pink: Derek Lewis

■ AFTER contacting the press office of the prisons' department with some questions about Granada-reject Mr Derek Lewis, director general of the prison service, the Eye was rather surprised to receive a letter from Mr Lewis himself.

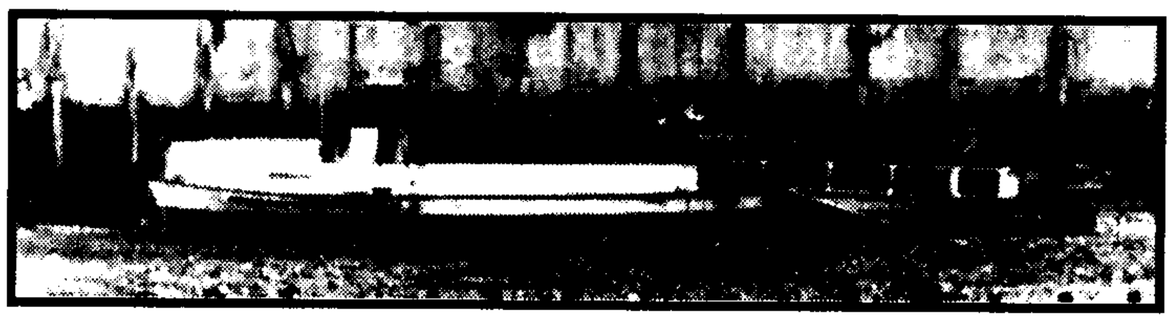
He provides the following information about himself: Salary: £125,000 a year, plus performance bonus up to £43,650.

Transport: he has his own chauffeur-driven car. In September he hired a helicopter to take him to the rioting Wymott prison; and in October he took a "light aircraft" to witness rioting at Haverigg prison.

Other work: he is chairman of the "golden TV oldies" firm UK Gold. He will not say how much he is paid, nor will UK Gold's public relations firm.

Mr Lewis does well, but not as well as his new finance director, Mr Brian Landers, who is employed by Price Waterhouse and seconded to the prison service on a three-year contract.

The prison service pays him between £127,200 and £146,400 a year, depending on how well he meets his targets. Price Waterhouse pays his national insurance and pension contributions. In these straitened times, Mr Landers must be relieved that he is "not precluded from taking on a non-executive role outside the prison service".



MARCHIONMESS

THE devastating Channel Four *Despatches* programme exposing the scandal of the deficient Bowbelle dredger which smashed into the pleasure craft Marchioness in 1989, killing 51, raised a question which is still being asked — but never answered — by the bereaved families.

Public inquiries were held into disasters at Zeebrugge, King's Cross, Piper Alpha and Clapham — so why was no public inquiry held into the Bowbelle/Marchioness horror?

Lawyers prevented Channel Four from recording three facts.

1). The company which owned and ran the Bowbelle is a subsidiary of Ready Mixed Concrete, which since 1979 has given £298,200 to the Tory party.

2). A director of RMC is Sir Neil Macfarlane, former Tory minister..

3). Cecil Parkinson, transport secretary at the time, also turned down a public inquiry into the Lockerbie disaster (after he had assured bereaved families he would "do his best" to get one). The impression persists among both sets of bereaved families that Parkinson took his orders from Margaret Thatcher, who has always had a soft spot for the British construction industry.

This was not the only difficulty faced by the programme-makers.

Twice, before the programme was even broadcast, RMC complained about it to the Independent Television Commission (ITC).

Knight of the Poll Tax

■ THE LATE Tory MP and rail buff Sir Robert Adley described rail privatisation as "a poll tax on wheels". The phrase has a deeper significance than he realised.

The last *Eye* exposed the role in rail privatisation of Sir Christopher Foster, the director of Coopers & Lybrand who was adviser to the secretary of state for transport on rail privatisation and miraculously became a director of Railtrack, the core of the new privatised railway... and a generous client of Coopers & Lybrand.

Sir Christopher was also a key genius behind the poll tax. In 1990, as the poll tax and its alma mater, M. Thatcher, slid to extinction, the BBC's *Panorama* prepared a programme on the origins of the poll tax. The programme was not broadcast, but its findings were published in 1991 by reporter Michael Crick in an obscure journal called *Contemporary Record*.

Crick explained how, in 1984, four wise men were chosen by the minister responsible, William Waldegrave, to mastermind the poll tax. They were Lord Rothschild, Lenny Hoffman QC (later a judge), Tom Wilson, an economics professor from Glasgow, and Christopher Foster of the LSE and Coopers & Lybrand.

"If any one individual provided the intellectual backing for the poll tax," wrote Crick, "it was probably Foster." As the plans took shape, three of the four wise men took fright. Hoffman, Wilson and Rothschild all voiced their objections and predicted disaster. Only Foster remained absolutely solid. In 1986, as the last poll tax hurdles were cleared, he was knighted.

Cool-hand Coolican

■ **The *Eye* asked the department of trade and the Scott inquiry about Mr Michael Coolican, head of the export control department of the DTI. Mr Coolican was scheduled to appear before Scott on 2 December, but mysteriously did not. Spot the difference in the replies:**

DTI: "Oh, the whole thing was rescheduled because the questions on the day before had run over."

The Scott Inquiry: "We had further questions that we wanted to put to Mr Coolican and he said he needed more time to consider them."

The *Eye* presents a third explanation. Coolican has been heard telling colleagues and friends out loud that he has "had just about enough" of civil servants like him "having to cover up for ministers".

Whatever can this mean? Mr Coolican may well be worth hearing when he finally talks to the inquiry on 18 January.

You can write to Paul Foot at 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG,or leave a message for him on 071 287 3183

In the City

THE DISASTER prone Serious Farce Office (SFO) is starting to lose lawyers as well as cases — a development some SFO critics might see as no bad thing.

Latest expected to make for the Elm Street exit is John Tate, the case controller of the all-important Maxwell prosecution. Tate is said to be returning to customs and excise from whence he came.

Whether this is a great loss remains to be seen, but it will do nothing to still rumours that all is far from well with the Maxwell case — the trial that could well decide whether the SFO and its director George Staple survive.

Tate's win-loss record on Barlow Clowes, hailed by the tiny band of SFO supporters as a success, is not a great source of comfort. Peter Clowes and Peter Naylor were jailed, but two other defendants were acquitted, the trials of two more were not proceeded with and one case collapsed when the charges were dismissed. Won 2, lost 5 is hardly championship style.

Tate's expected departure follows the previous exit "on secondment" of Lorna Harris, case controller from day one of the now probably doomed Polly Peck case. She looks cast to take the fall over the mishandling of Nadir's defence documents and misinforming of the attorney-general. Not before though, it seems, some attempt was made within the SFO to dump the fault on to a junior detective.

Also no longer on full-time active service at the SFO is in house barrister Helen Garlick due to health reasons. This will no doubt make no difference to the SFO work which will continue to be handled by her barrister husband Paul Garlick.

Still plodding along at Elm House, however, is Fred Coford, the legal Napoleon in charge of the Levitt case, where the SFO was outmanoeuvred all along. The police fiercely opposed the SFO decision not to appeal Mr Justice (Lack of) Laws ruling on two trials which meant gambling everything on a fraudulent trading conviction. But Coford and Staple went along with that and the ludicrous Levitt plea bargain which resulted in his sentence to 180 hours gardening and painting.

But then until the conviction of Eagle Trust fraudster John Ferriday the word was that Coford had yet to obtain a conviction in a major case. And even Eagle Trust was only a partial result. Ferriday and another defendant were convicted but against two others the SFO offered no evidence.

Meanwhile the threat of yet another major embarrassment hangs over the SFO as a result of its handling of the case against one defendant resulting from its investigation of the Bank of Conman & Cocaine International.

Former BCCI executive Imram Imam, due to go on trial early next year, has been engaging the SFO in pre-trial legal battle over documents seized from his London home amid allegations of abuse of process. Imam is more than a little upset that having helped the US investigation into BCCI by the New York district attorney Robert Morgenthau and offering to assist the SFO his reward was to be charged.

But the real embarrassment for the SFO is that in targeting Imam they have not only lost any use he might have had as a witness in the major BCCI trial against Nazmu Virani but, more importantly, have greatly angered Morgenthau and his staff.

So much so that Morgenthau's senior prosecutor John Moscow, in an unparalleled snub to a fellow law enforcement agency, recently gave evidence for Imam and may do so again. Equally unimpressed have been the US Federal Reserve Bank, one of whose senior officials was reportedly escorted from a meeting at the SFO's offices by the police! Such mutual esteem follows earlier complaints by Morgenthau at the SFO's slowness to cooperate.

The SFO has produced a public interest immunity certificate — the notorious device employed by the government in the Matrix Churchill and Ordtech trials to hide its culpability in supplying Iraq — in a bid not to disclose sensitive documents to Imam.

Those with knowledge of the Imam case believe that there is a risk of serious embarrassment for the SFO.

INSTANT Polly Peck and fraud experts, such as former minister Michael Mates and recent *Eye* correspondents Roger Ratcliffe and Tim Kelsey, who see Asil Nadir as the victim of a Greek plot seem to have rediscovered an old favourite of the Nadir camp.

No less an authority than David Barchard, like Kelsey a man with a close knowledge of Turkey, in his Polly Peck book described how the *Eye*'s campaign during the eighties to expose the fiction that was Polly Peck's profits was seen by Turkish readers as "products of the Greek propaganda machine".

But if the *Eye* is all Greek to Ratcliffe and Kelsey, Polly Peck to them would seem to be all Turkish.

Consider the outraged Kelsey's cherry picking of the absurd claims made by self-confessed liars Michael Francis and Wendy Welsher, whose admission that they made up the supposed £3.5 million plot to bribe the Nadir trial judge was news only to the *Independent*.

Francis and Welsher claimed they made up the plot because the police told them to do so. Even the *Independent* did not believe that lie enough to print it, so Kelsey courageously chose not to explain Francis/Welsher's actions! And that was only one of several Francis/Welsher claims which proved either wrong or independently unprovable. Such matters glossed over by the *Independent* do indeed show "who has been lying to whom".

As to the impartiality of the still unshown *Panorama* about the Polly Peck plots that never were on which Ratcliffe worked there can be no better confirmation than that given last month by the man himself. Nadir told his own newspaper, *Cyprus Today*: "I have spent seven months with the BBC to assist them in a production of the *Panorama* programme". Perhaps that is why it remains unshown?

LONRHO'S own grey man Dieter Bock scored another cleverly orchestrated coup in his battle with his new best enemy "Tiny" Rowland with news that Lonrho had dropped plans to fund a "Ghadaffi didn't do it" documentary about the Lockerbie bombing.

Word of Lonrho's backing of the film having been leaked to the *Financial Times* — no doubt to Bock's irritation — ahead of the December board meeting, outraged directors lead by Bock could immediately reverse the previous Rowland decision about which many already knew. Once again the City could see that it was Bock not Rowland calling the shots.

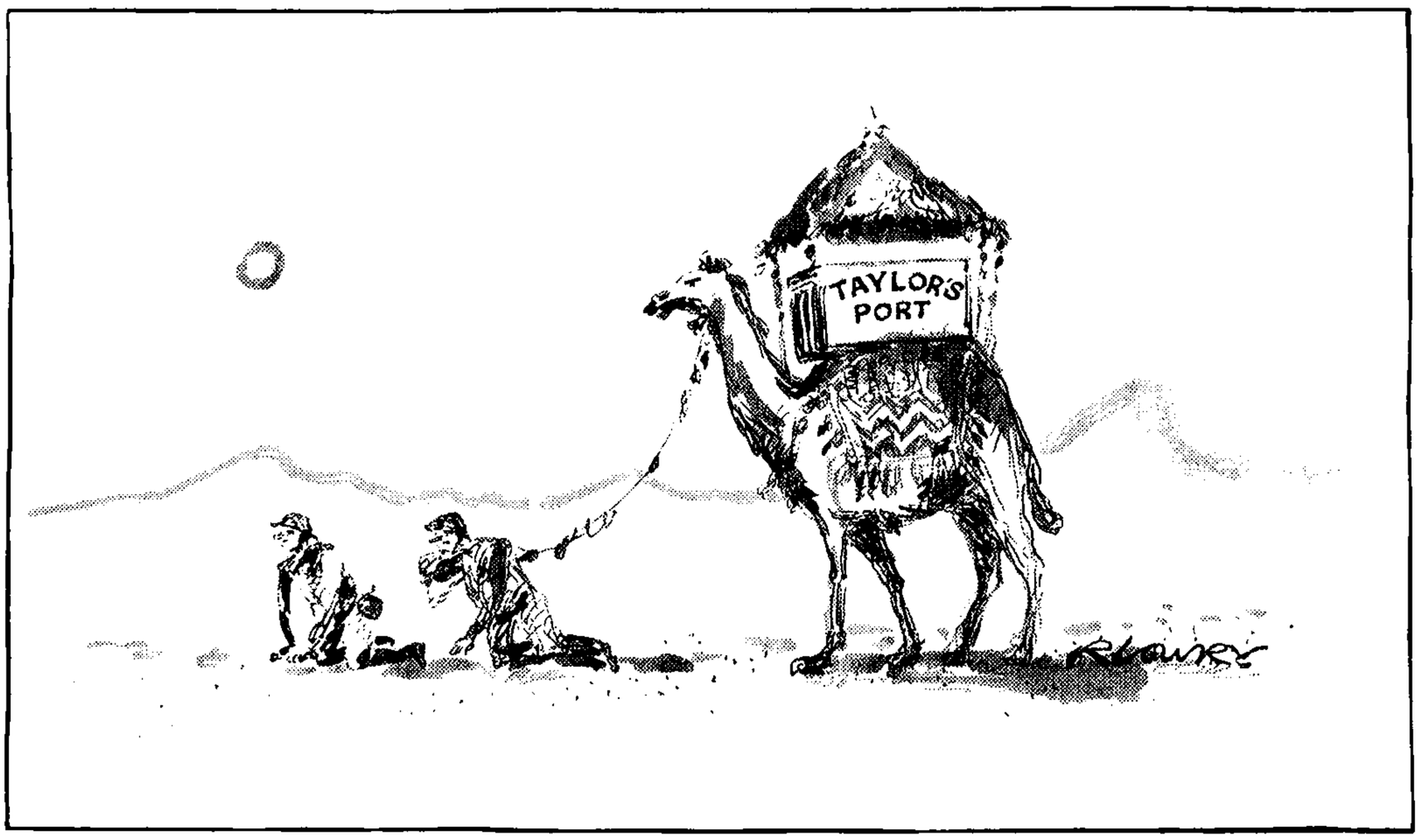
Whether Bock's position on the Lockerbie film is purely influenced by City opinion is open to doubt. The premise of the film — that the initial British government view that the bombing was the work of Palestinians backed by Syria and Iran was correct — would do nothing to ensure future Bock invitations to Downing Street. Bock was a recent guest with the visiting president of Uzbekistan with whom Lonrho is in business. Also the film would not win friends in Germany as it is said to blame security lapses there for enabling the bomb to be placed on board the Pan Am flight in Frankfurt and for enabling the bomb maker to escape.

FULLY RECOVERED from the suicidal trauma of his abandoned trial, former Guinness adviser Roger Seelig is said to be planning a City comeback, possibly via a small "shell" operation currently to be found among the penny stocks.

His old client and fellow medical marvel Ernest Saunders is also going from strength to strength as a marketing consultant after surviving terminal Alzheimer's disease. Saunders is also threatening to overturn his conviction through the European Court. With festive goodwill we can all now clearly see how the whole Guinness case was a dreadful mistake and a cruel persecution of innocent City men. No wonder British justice is the envy of the world.

'Slicker'

Advertisement



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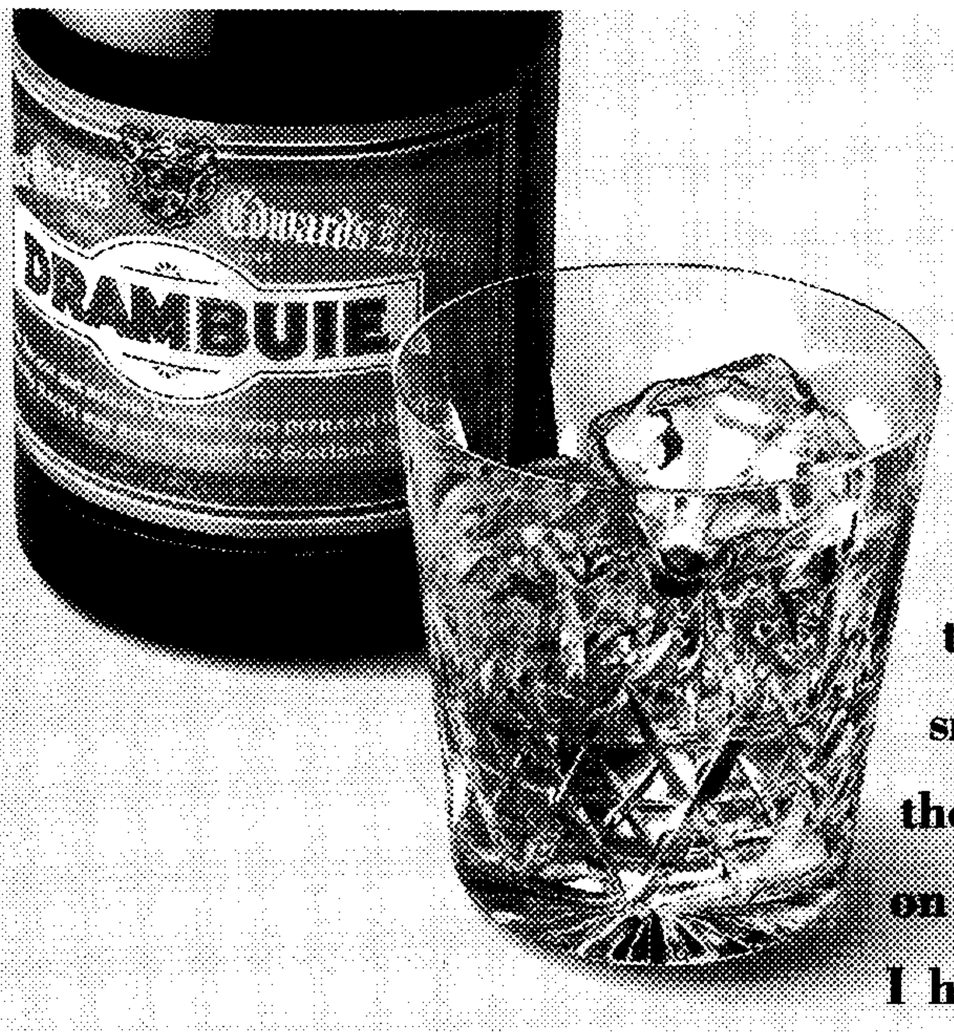

Dear Drambuie, I'm appalled!

What are you playing at? Your campaign to get the public to drink this fine tipple with ice is totally mad. All this drinking it 'on the rocks' smacks of American liberalism to me. Not since the Chief of Amphibious Warfare suggested landing on Juno Beach with a battalion of windsurfers have I heard such a daft idea. Don't get me wrong. We have our fingers on the pulse down here. Sonic the squirrel is no stranger to this household. But to desecrate 248 years of tradition sets my Scottish blood (my wife's father was capped for Scotland at Curling) boiling.

Bonnie Prince Charlie won't be resting too peacefully, either. Was it not he who first took the secret recipe of aged malt whiskies, herbs and honey, and sped in his bonnie boat like a bird on the wing to the Mackinnons of Skye? There to enjoy the smooth, subtle flavours of Drambuie in the arms of his beloved Flora. The suggestion that ice would have any part to play in such a warm, bathetic scenario is laughable.

Don't assume I'm being blimpish over this. Marjorie and I have been drinking your Drambuie, alternating it with and without ice. In fact, we're enjoying some as I write.

True, ice does seem to bring out the flavour of the drink. The fine malts I particularly noted. But must tradition always play second fiddle to you Johnnies in marketing?

If the plan was to make the drink go further by watering down the Drambuie with ice, it's failed.

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And I hope your campaign ends up there, too.

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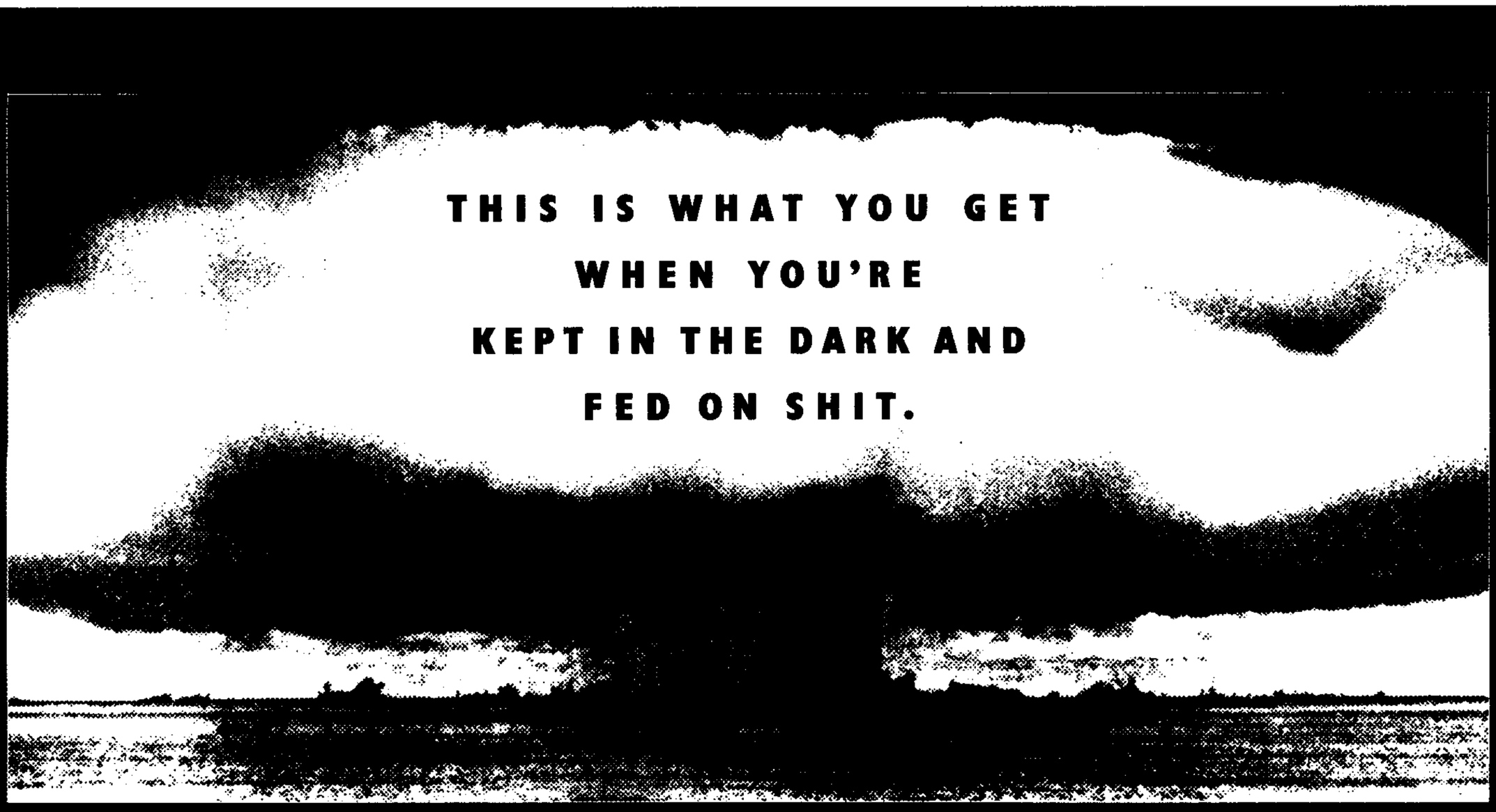

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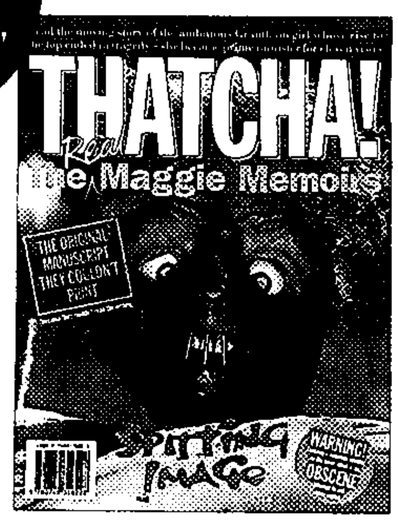

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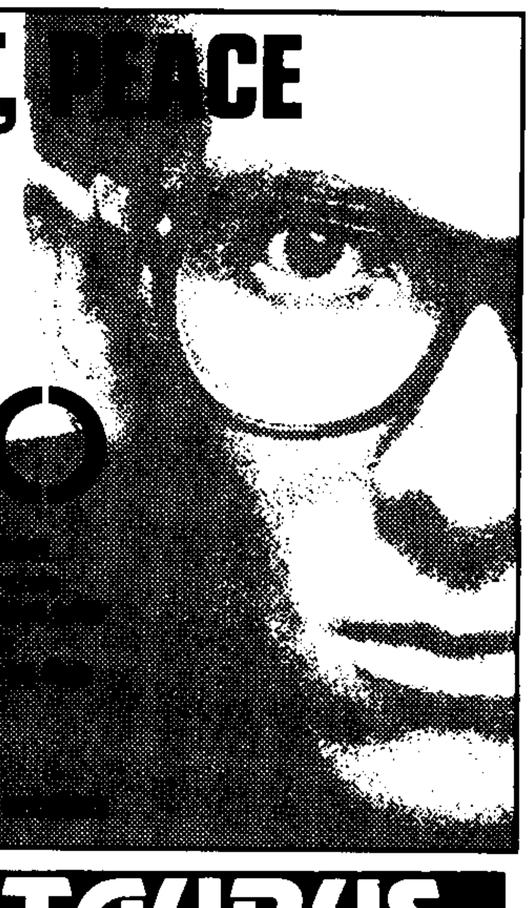

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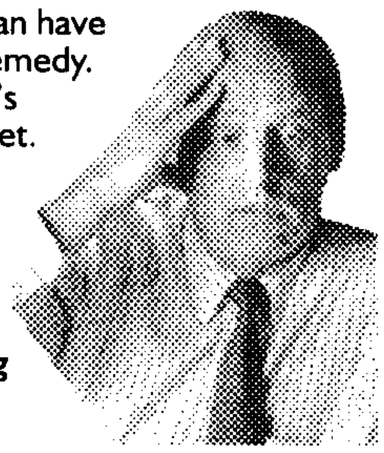

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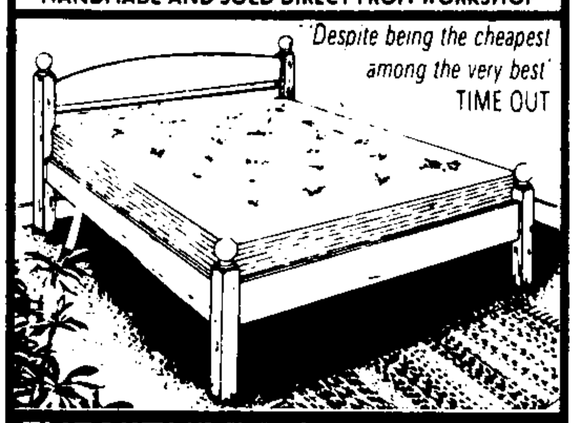

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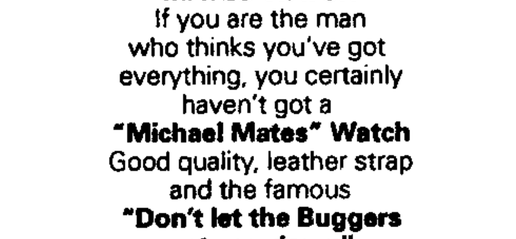

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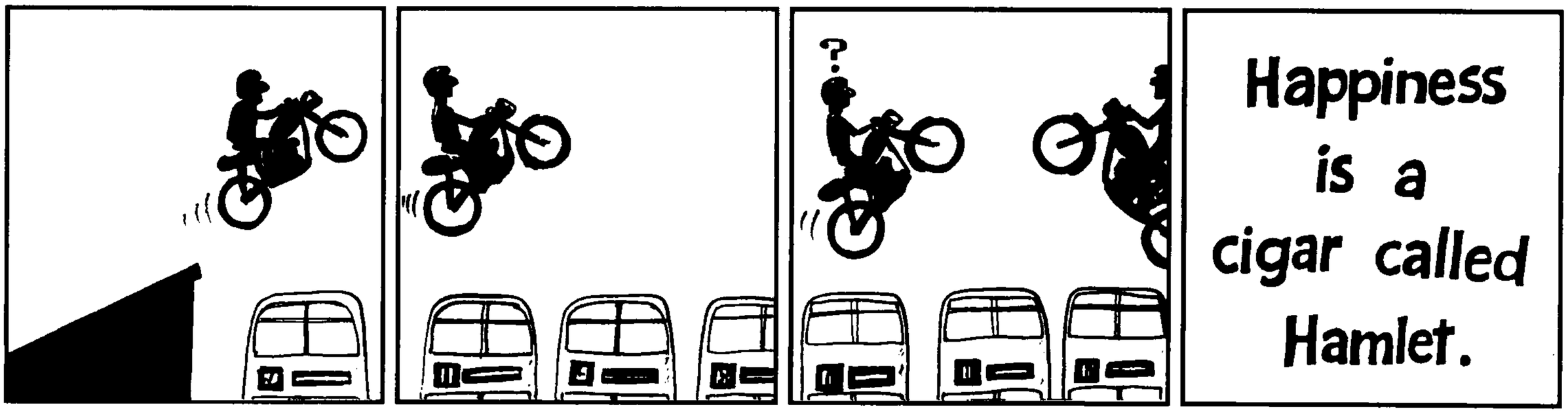

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SLIM, ATTRACTIVE, intelligent, modest? male, 33, seeks similar woman for fun and romance. Box 2835.

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CHARMING, WITTY, intelligent, good looking, passionate and modest — yes don't forget modest — Romeo seeks literary Juliet to write volume two of same. Box 3035.

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SINGLE MALE, 29, tall, good humoured, attractive, solvent, seeks sincere attractive female, 24-33, for evenings out and hopefully relationship. Photo appreciated. Box 3230.

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AMERICAN OR Australian, attractive male, holiday companion required — 27-32, GSoH and fun-loving — for single, 29, female leading to a relationship if no delays en route. Box 3333.

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FEMALE, 39 YRS, attractive, bright and scruffy. Serious and moody, but GSoH. Seeking man for partnership. Herts. Box 4335.

TALL, ATTRACTIVE, solvent 39-yr-old male, seeks discerning and alluring woman to share good times and bad. South Devon area. Box 4435.

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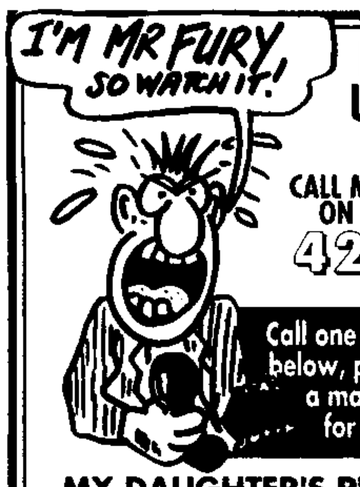

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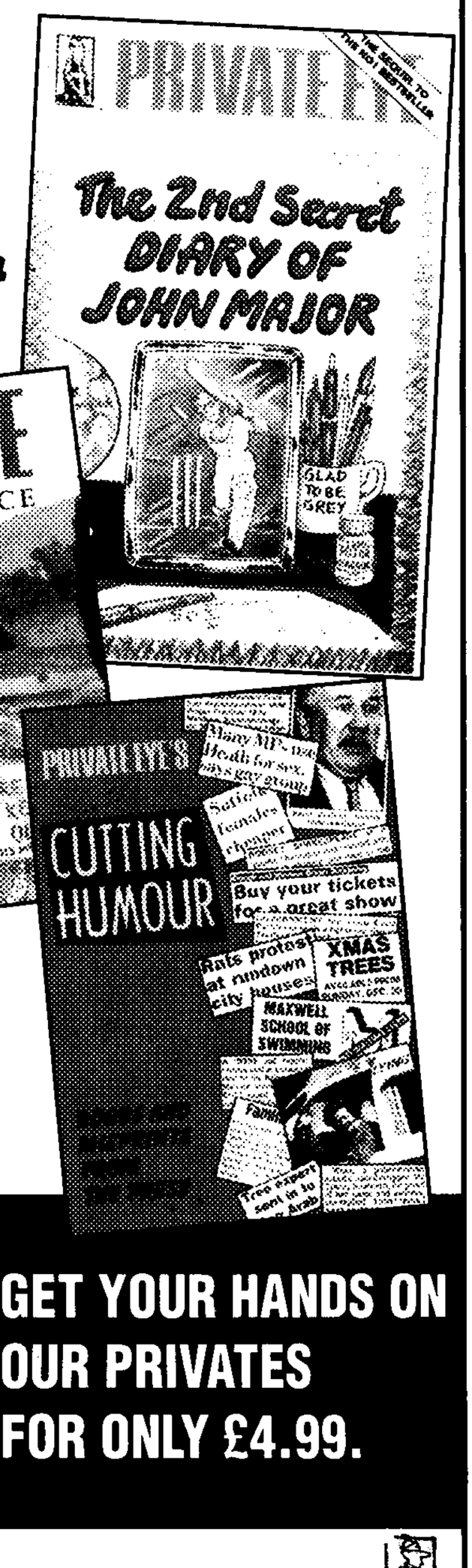

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Please send PRIVATE EYE to the above person for one year starting mid-January 1994. I ENCLOSE £15 (UK rate, for overseas rates see page 5)

9 770032 888037 51

or by ACCESS/VISA Number ..... *Expiry date* .....

My Name (Please print) .....

Address .....

..... *postcode* .....

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